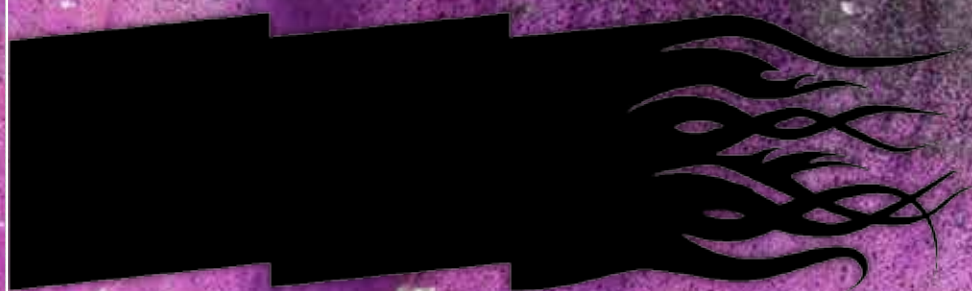


BLACK FLAG



The necessity of Afem
Protest and the law
Post-revolutionary schools
Osborne's failed economics
Understanding Iran

Bakunin remembered
The First International
Anarchists and WWI

Reviews:
The anthologies

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Issue 236
2014/15

Editorial

Hello everyone, we're here again!

After taking a year out from our usual schedule you may not have been expecting us to show up with a 2014/15 edition, but Black Flag bounces back more often than a polybutadiene rubber ball and so it is today.

One of the reasons we weren't able to come out in 2013 was down to our reviews editor Ade Dimmick being unavailable, and as of this issue he is still off so our usual Hob's Choice series of pamphlet reviews is temporarily on hold.

However Ade is hoping to be back for issue 237 and there will certainly be plenty to look at by then.

In the meantime other people have jumped on board to write this year and many thanks go to our contributors, who have come up with some cracking articles, our thought-provoking interviewees and the Anarchist Federation for continuing to contribute content.

It is not, on the face of it, looking to be a fantastic year for radical magazines and papers. With SolFed concentrating on one-off works and the sad demise of Freedom Newspaper (though not their website, which has been revamped and is well worth keeping an eye on), the torch is being largely carried by the Anarchist Federation's Organise, the excellent Occupied Times, Strike and Plan C's unofficial publication Bamn.

All of these outfits operate on a shoestring, and your support, be it through buying, making or selling is vital to keep open a free press that gets out beyond the filters and white noise of online activism.

Specifically with Black Flag, we think we have it's important to keep this little project alive, and with luck, to grow it.

The model of class struggle anarchist groups contributing key longer-form articles to a non-denominational magazine alongside individual writers is an important project to get right, and the AF's work with us is a good starting point.

If other organisations wish to get involved on a similar basis, let us know and we'll be happy to work something out. We also invite people who prefer to see their name in print to submit via the details on the right.

Onwards and upwards!



Rising again: The red and black ladybird is back baby, and charging over leaves like there's no tomorrow.

Picture: Anya Brennan

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Ethos

Black Flag is for a social system based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation – against state control and all forms of government and economic repression. To establish a share in the general prosperity for all – the breaking down of racial, religious, national and sex barriers – and to fight for the life of one world.

The Black Flag has been a worldwide symbol for anarchism since the 1880s. It is at base a representative of the negation of all oppressive structures.

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Anarcha-feminism and the struggle

Cover story: An AFem 2014 organiser writes on fighting patriarchy within anarchist circles

Anarchist theory holds that nothing meaningful can change without the destruction of capitalism and the state by the people oppressed by them, and gender-oppressed people must play a key role in driving the process.

As with the struggles of people of colour and other oppressed groups with which our fight intersects, serious steps towards gender equality cannot wait until after there is political freedom and economic equality. Meaningful social change ultimately has to come from a revolutionary analysis and process – politically reformed or “feminised” states and economic structures will not eradicate patriarchy any more than they will bring wider freedom or equality. So we initiated a project to put the anarchism into feminism.

But we nonetheless have to defend feminism within wider ‘radical’ politics, where working class women are involved. The formal structures within the Socialist Workers Party were such that sexual abuse and rape-denial thrived, and this influenced the timing of our project. Few anarchy-feminists felt like leaving those women without support just because they weren’t anarchists.

Sexual predation was also taking place within the often misogynistic “free spaces” opened up by groups such as Occupy and the wider anti-capitalist movement. Attempts by anarchy-feminists and other feminists to introduce codes of behaviour addressing sexist behaviour were often unwelcome.

In both of these examples, official and unofficial hierarchies maintained gender inequality and oppression. Coercive power over women is exercised by men who not only control material resources, but who experience more abstract forms of privilege, difficult to define but surviving both within centralist, explicit hierarchies (the SWP) and informal, unacknowledged hierarchies (Occupy).

Both kinds of organisation will inevitably fail gender oppressed people, and people trying to operate outside of the state and capitalism will not necessarily produce egalitarian social relationships. They will often reproduce oppressive aspects of the society they reject, such as racism, able-ism, homophobia, as well as sexism and patriarchy.

Dislodging sexism.

Sexism and patriarchy are so deep-seated as to be more difficult for political radicals to dislodge. Racism, homophobia and so on are more likely to be challenged within those circles. They aren’t always challenged, certainly, but it is more acceptable and straightforward to do so.

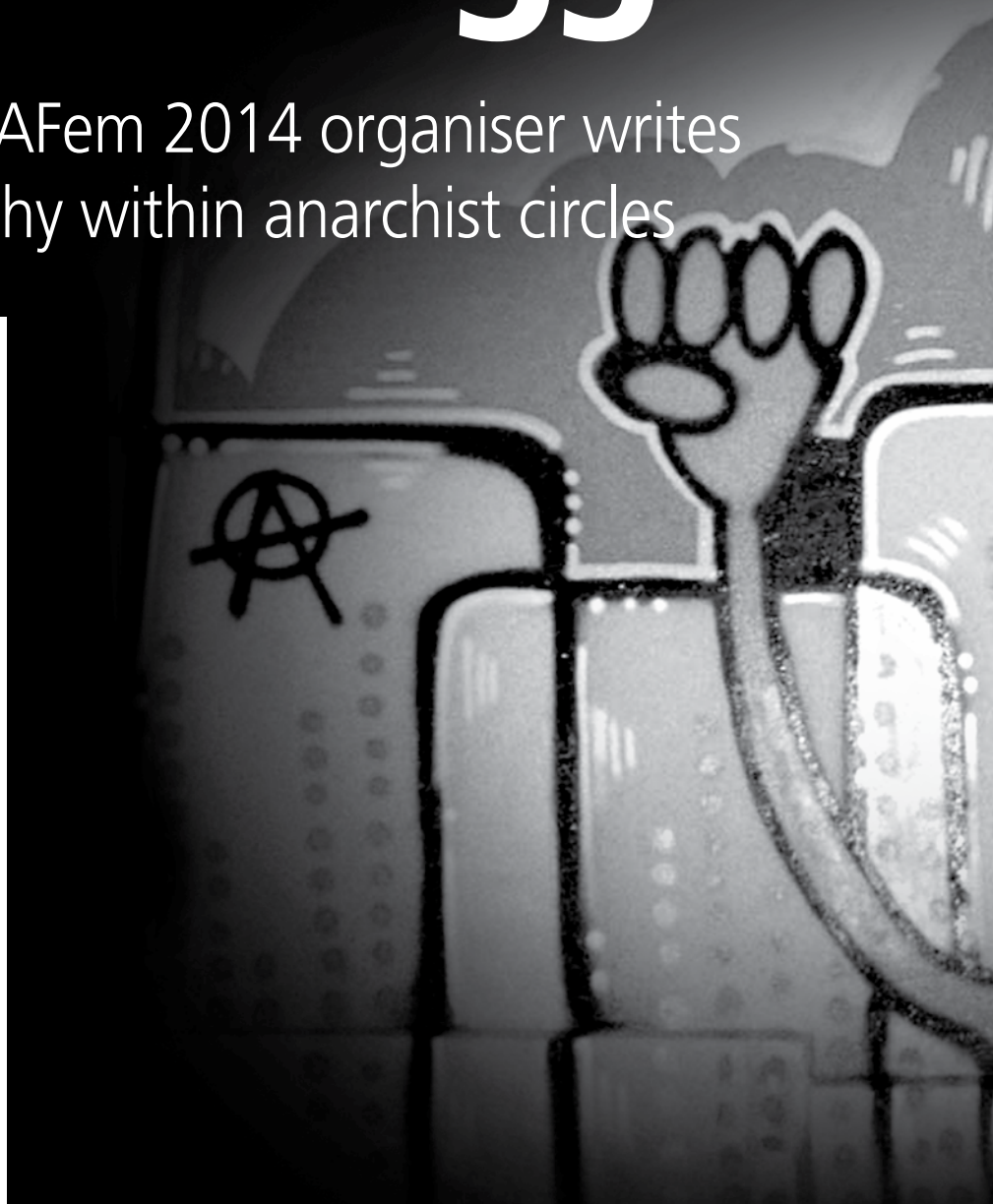
Racist attitudes, for example, are relatively easy for white people to identify in others and even in themselves, once we make the decision to try to be aware of them. Patriarchy operates in ways that are most often too subtle to notice.

Racism and homophobia are relatively modern forms of hatred. I don’t mean that there was no racism, homophobia and so

on at all before the formation of the modern state. But the denigration and oppression of women, or at best the concept of their innate inferiority, was an over-arching and ubiquitous feature of successful early societies, an obsession of monotheistic cultures, for example.

Patriarchy is not just a common feature or by-product of unequal and hierarchical societies, but has been a key, institutionalised basis for inequality in the first place, present where other forms of oppression were more marginal.

Anarchists must work towards the destruction of all aspects of white privilege, for example, and homophobia. But I think that the end of racism and homophobia in their most obnoxious forms could happen





International movement: A mural in San Sebastian, Spain

Picture: Placida/Flickr CC

the wider working class. Because we have an anti-oppressive analysis, it is our responsibility to get as close to a free and equal pre-revolutionary movement as possible. This makes what we do and how we operate within our movement of vital importance to the success of anarchism itself.

Sexism in the anarchist movement.

But elements of 21st century anarchism itself are part of the problem. Many of those perpetrating abuse, or simple casual misogyny, call themselves anarchist and consider themselves part of the movement and even its formal, membership organisations.

These have included the Anarchist Federation, in a couple of examples. It is not possible to write an article about sexism and abuse in the anarchist movement that is transparent or honest without conceding this.

But however well the AF has dealt with it – and I think we have dealt with it well – it is clearly not enough to simply have entrance criteria which should mean that all members are actively anti-sexist, or to have an autonomous caucus for gender-oppressed people, or to have a zero-tolerance, survivor-believing policy when it does happen, resulting in resignations or disassociation of abusers.

I would argue that formally constituted anarchist organisations are better equipped to deal with such incidents, when they do take place, than some other parts of the anarchist movement are, although that's another discussion. Maybe organisations need a specific officer for gender-oppressed people, who pro-actively approaches new members and makes such that they know what to expect from us.

Certainly the movement as a whole needs to do more than pay lip-service to “doing more to confront sexism”. Who is supposed to be doing more of this confronting? If you experience sexism and gender oppression, you are constantly confronting it. Having to confront it within our political movement as well is not acceptable.

In fact anarchists have been talking about “confronting sexism” within the movement for decades. It's time that we “imposed anti-sexism” on the movement. And there is the problem. “Imposing” is authoritarian, right? Let's try “refusing to tolerate sexism”. That's too passive, given the stakes. How do we “not tolerate” in an effective way if compliance is considered voluntary on the part of sexists?

Here is how such issues can play out in practice. When we held our first open AFem2014 meeting, at the 2013 London Anarchist Bookfair, and floated the concept of a conference, it was interrupted by anti-feminists and rape apologists who were trolling the meetings and common spaces, often unchallenged, trying to derail anti-sexist activity that they did not approve of.

People had to leave our meeting in order to try to contain the situation, so that we could carry on organising. So we realised that it was the case that we couldn't even

without a social revolution. I don't think we can or will eradicate patriarchy and many of the aspects of sexism without a revolution, any more than we can abolish social class. Just because it has been this way for so long with patriarchy, does not mean it is 'natural' or hard-wired into us any more than class is.

But I seriously doubt that we could have equal gender relationships without the conscious and deliberate undermining of all forms of hierarchy and inequality, formal or informal, theoretical and material, through social revolution. I can imagine a non-racist and non-homophobic society, but I can't imagine a non-gender oppressive one. I can't imagine what that would feel like, because almost every social relationship is

shaped by patriarchy, even where we don't consciously recognise it. Patriarchy shapes racism, able-ism, ageism and obviously homophobia, but they do not have as strong an effect on patriarchy. If I can't imagine what this non-patriarchal society would be like, then it feels no closer than social revolution itself does.

Sadly, it follows from this that I don't think that people who are gender oppressed socially can be completely free and equal even within the anarchist movement, at least before the wider revolutionary event.

But this is not to accept gender oppression as something we can't do much about. This is where it is important to realise that the position of anarchists in a pre-revolutionary context is slightly different from that of



talk about feminism in a formal way at an anarchist event without being undermined. Worse, there was very little we could do to prevent it. There is an assumption that, because the Bookfair is an event open to all, we cannot expect help in protecting anarcho-feminist space in future, and will almost certainly face the same problem in 2014.

The attitude from the wider movement seems to be that the movement itself can handle its own miscreants. But it doesn't. It could, but it doesn't value gender and sexual equality highly enough to stop rape apologists and sexual abusers getting into its spaces, even when we know who they are. It's commonplace to regard the pure philosophy of anarchism more highly than the experience and material reality of gender oppressed anarchists.

Afem2014 is determined to do as much as we can to create safer spaces and to protect them by saying up-front that there are certain behaviours which we will not accept, that we will challenge actively.

Are we really reproducing the authoritarian structures of society if we

state that we will not tolerate rape apologism and the presence of abusers in supposedly "anarchist" spaces? Anarchism is about freedom and equality for everyone, not an "anything goes" attitude which allows some people to dominate others and drive them from our spaces.

Being convincing as anarcho-feminist theorists and activists.

We also have to be more convincing. I'm not talking about having a responsibility to spend our valuable time pandering to those cis-men who "want to learn more about anarcho-feminism".

And it's not worth our while arguing with misogynistic trolls who turn up at mixed meetings to argue on an abstracted level, as though both our positions are equally valid, and think it is up to us to make the better case.

I think that we have to organise more convincingly for ourselves, like a movement going forward, rather than accepting to be regarded as a tendency forever sniping from the sideline, which is how anarcho-feminists are often seen.

We need ongoing structures to enable and support and our ongoing discussions and activity in the range of struggles we face, including inside our movement. Ultimately, we have to be convinced that it is "our" movement, and that we are making it an offer it cannot refuse. If we can't do that for ourselves, how can we convince non-anarchist feminists to become anarchists?

This sort of talk is threatening to people who dominate our movement, and they find all sorts of ways to marginalise and trivialise it. Amongst the most insidious that we can identify is their apparent suspicion that anarcho-feminists harbour "identity politics", that we put our desire to liberate ourselves gender-wise ahead of the working class.

It is as though, when we identify ourselves as gender-oppressed, we somehow stop being working class, or lose our focus on the class war. In other words, anarcho-feminists need to be guided back to the true path. Left to our own devices, we are counter-revolutionaries who have more in common with people suffering other forms of oppression than class. We want to "take over" the revolution, it seems, conspiring with other oppressed people to take power away from white working class, straight, able-bodied, young cis-men.

It follows from this that we are often not taken seriously when we theorise or act on questions other than that of sexism or gender oppression. When independent theorising takes place in an anarcho-feminist context, but does not exclusively restrict itself to addressing the situation of gender-oppressed people, it is not seen as anarchist theorising or organising, but as feminist.

This is because it does not come from forums to which cis-male theoreticians have "equal" access (that is, to say, the freedom to dominate the discussion). It is as though, without cis-men, we cannot come up with ideas or conclusions that are applicable to the rest of the working class, or make a contribution to anarchist theory beyond questions of our own oppression.

This misses the fact that it is simply not possible to divorce our experience as gender oppressed people from our experience under the state and capitalism. It is our material reality. Equally, cis-men have an experience within the system that they cannot divorce their ideas from. Their experience too is gendered by external forces, and they may feel gender restricted, pre-judged and even oppressed.

The difference is that their material reality is one in which they far more usually benefit, and experience a privileged position over working class cis-women and trans* people.

Cis-men may indeed be ideological feminists, and very often and very actively support our agenda and activity. But they still benefit from male domination of society and apparently can't help but reproduce this within our movement, often in ways which they don't even spot in themselves, let alone acknowledge or challenge.

Therefore we can and will theorise and agitate from the perspective of gender-oppressed working class people, and what we come up with may indeed turn out differently from the theorising that takes place in cis-male-dominated – anarchist environments.

There is not one simple, generalised way

How we organised: Some of the challenges and solutions of Afem 2014

This was written before Afem took place and as of that point, we had a huge way to go. But I can make some general comments about the thinking that went on while it was being organised.

Very early on we established our own structures and protocols to try to ensure that everyone could play as full-a-role as they wanted to. We set up an e-mail organising list, and this is where the vast majority of the decision-making took place. We established guidelines for using the list, and also a formal decision-making process. This enabled us to revise our invitation statement twice as our politics became more clarified through discussion on the list.

We tended to refer to ourselves as "the organising group". We have never taken a formal decision on this, but we aren't a "collective" or "committee" as such. I imagine a post conference de-brief will address how (and if!) we want to be constituted in the longer term. We have operated as individuals on the list, although of course what we say and do is influenced by where we are coming from, including organisationally.

Organising online has allowed more people to be involved internationally too, and Internationalism has been an important theme for us, both in terms of sharing knowledge and ideas about the situation for gender oppressed people in other regions, and establishing and drawing solidarity, for example between organisation around issues like abortion. Early on we made several very valuable contacts in the Americas, and as part of our international organising there has been a strong Latin American involvement, as well as a European and Mediterranean focus.

We have received funding from organisations and individuals, ranging from large grants to smaller donations, and several fundraising initiatives were put in place. We are REALLY grateful to everyone who has put their hands in their pockets, including people who are not covered by our invitation statement.

Finally, we have been really tight on making sure that everyone involved with the conference actively agreed to our invitation statement and our Safer Spaces protocols. At the time of writing I think we have done as much as we reasonably can so far to ensure the safe involvement of all gender-oppressed people and that we have made it clear that we are not open to discussions in which transphobic ideas or rape apology will play a part.

We were not open to cis-men coming to make a case that they should have access to the conference. Of course cis-men suffer because of sexism too, and may feel that elements of their oppression relates to their gender. But they also benefit from sexism and gender oppression. Lots of us have had less-than-good experiences of discussions where cis-men involve themselves, including at the London Bookfair last year, which is one thing that helped us arrive at a policy which excludes cis-men, for 2014 at least.

Given the experiences of the sort of people who were likely to attend, many of whom would be survivors of abuse, a Safer Spaces policy was defined as not being there in case there was someone present who could be triggered by a discussion, but assuming that there would be someone present who could be damaged if things were discussed clumsily, and that care and concern for all participants was essential.



in which working class people experience oppression. Gender-oppressed people do not talk as though there is. Our starting point, routinely, in writing or discussing as anarcha-feminists, is to acknowledge something like, “we come from a variety of backgrounds”.

This is not intended simply as a description. It is a starting point which forces us to think about each other's material reality and to adapt our collective identity in ways which no single group can dominate, and within which no one's individual experience can be belittled or invalidated.

Still, some types of anarchists will refuse to acknowledge this as a valid process. It is regarded as relativising a class analysis, making it something individual rather than collective, and therefore compromising it.

So, addressing our own movement has become a key, if not overriding concern for Afem2014. We consider our very existence as a group of people organising this conference to be a challenge to an anarchist movement which is dominated by a powerful minority and an inability, even unwillingness, to change itself, such are the benefits of belonging to the group which is most gender oppressive.

We are also concerned with reclaiming anarchism for people oppressed on a multitude of levels in addition to that of class.

The British and European anarchy-feminist movement, at least, reflects the white domination of the wider movement, to the exclusion of almost any people of colour. Some of us are even actively co-opting the ideas of anarchists who are people of colour, whilst contributing little to the liberation of the people who conceived them.

What I have written is partly influenced by the work of Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, and



Rise in activity: Top, 2012's Million Women Rise march. Above, March Against Rape Culture in Boston USA. Left, a satirical patch. Pictures: Tamara Craiu, Chase Carter and FieryLaSirena



not least his refusal to tolerate a racially-oppressive anarchist movement any longer. He advocates taking the movement away from white supremacist anarchists, and perhaps would not exclude Afem2014 from that category.

It hurts. But by failing, as we sadly almost certainly will, to attract more than a handful of gender-oppressed anarchists of colour to Afem2014, we reflect a wider failure to accept a “leadership of ideas” coming from ethnic minority or non-western anarchists, and not only on questions which are of interest to all anarchists, but even on questions of their own oppression.

But a huge amount of the most exciting anarchy-feminist writing that is being produced internationally is coming from non-European countries and has race as a central concern.

Afem2014 can respond to this and start

to bring about a shift in the operational and ideological focus for the movement, with the intersections between class, race and gender becoming where anarchism positions itself in the future.

■ *This article is the perspective of an organiser of the Afem2014 conference from the Anarchist Federation. They are a white, straight cis-woman. The ideas are not intended to represent those of Afem2014 or the Anarchist Federation.*

By Laura Biding



Reportage:

Activists are being left in limbo as mass arrests go to courts – and it's getting worse

What's interesting about this year is not so much the principle cases we've had so far but what's in the offing such as changes to public order policing, in particular with an increased interest in the anti-fascist network, and in the run-up to changes to Legal Aid due in 2016.

Recently there have been cases in London at Cricklewood, in Brighton at the March For England and in Sheffield. We're looking at whether there is some overall pattern to it, whether the cops are working on some way to undermine the antifascist movement by some ridiculous conspiracy or putting people on bail for some length of time.

Brighton has an annual March For England in April which various right-wing groups co-operate to be on and it's usually opposed by a large counter-demonstration. This year there were 26 arrests, roughly split between fascists and anti-fascists, most of which are low-level stuff, but there is a police appeal for witnesses for a violent disorder and an ongoing investigation into that.

With Cricklewood there have been three marches so far this year, in June, July and August, and there have been about a dozen people arrested overall, some of whom have been charged but none of which have yet come to trial. Again there's a big background here of police stopping and searching people, data mining for details and generally evidence gathering.

The final incident in Sheffield was basically just a pub fight close to the station where both sides were present. Again however people are on police bail for it, there's no particular evidence, it's just something that's hanging over people for the moment.

Of course it's always easy to get into conspiracy theory about these incidents and think that the police are doing it from some cunning master plan to undermine anti-fascist organising.

But it's also possible that it's simply that the process is so slow these days. The police aren't allowed to prosecute for any serious cases any more they have to give it to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to look at, and the CPS is rubbish, couldn't prosecute Satan.

But the ongoing effect is people being on bail, not knowing what's going to happen to them, and this is a problem.

To digress slightly, for last year's G8 there was a convergence centre occupied in Beak Street, Soho, London. Two people were charged with assaulting police, in July last



Long wait



Flashpoints: Anti-fascists at the Tower Hamlets demo in 2013. Above and right, policing at the March For England.

Pictures: Kerry L and Adam/Flickr CC

year, and they were convicted in July this year. Both received 16 weeks' imprisonment for it. So they're being punished twice, once by spending a year waiting to see what will happen, and then the sentence itself.

On top of the above there are a number of other ongoing cases, particularly from some of the student protests from the end of last year – Cops Off Campus – where a number of people have been charged with assaulting police. But that has to be looked at in the context that it was another case where we had mass arrests, about 40 people done for affray, and all but six got their charges dropped.

Last year's Tower Hamlets demonstration against the EDL was even more impressive, there was one person actually convicted, out of 286 arrests of our side and 14 from the EDL making 300. The cops with their great classical education called it Operation Hot Gates (or it might be more to do with the movie).

That one person was convicted of a minor public order offence, pleading guilty to throwing a smoke canister – no-one was hit and nothing was damaged.

And we've finally got to the end of the criminal cases for the Critical Mass bike ride for the opening of the Olympics in 2012. So we finally know the total on that,



for judgement

which is 182 people arrested, three people convicted, all for not obeying the conditions imposed on a procession – a trivial offence you can only get a fine for. So hopefully a lot of those people will be suing.

Caught in the middle

From an activist perspective, the fundamental problem is we're currently looking at layers of internal conflict between the police and the state.

The police are having their budget cut over the course of this Parliament by about 20%. So the force as a whole and their representatives, the commissioner and other chief officers, are going to the media, surreptitiously because they're not allowed to campaign politically, and making suggestions that crime is increasing because they don't have the budget to deal with it. On a slightly lower level, the Public Order Branch (POB), which deals with protests and such, is fighting its own corner for whatever part of the budget remains. In London this has had a big boost from the 2011 riots, which has seen an increase in the number of riot-trained officers by about 40% to "improve capacity" for future disturbances.

So now they've got a large number of people who have to have specialist training and equipment, but who don't have a lot to do so they find things for them to do. For example the TSG, which is the top-level riot force in London with about 750 officers, spends a lot of its time harassing poorer

communities with particular emphasis on people of colour.

What we often see on demonstrations, certainly over the last four years since the student demos of 2010, is a sort of yo-yo effect where certain protests are lightly policed and people can get away with almost anything, the classic example being the Millbank demo of that year with Tory HQ being taken over, and then a flipside that the next demo sees people get kettled for eight hours.

You can almost see the the public order cadre senior officers being called in by Commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe, who's had the Home Secretary in his ear saying "well what are you doing about these students." And they say "ah well it's human rights guv, we've got to take an easy line and also resources are really stretched."

And there's no way the commissioner can really do his traditional role of giving these people a bollocking. They're at the end of their career, public order is a dead-end. You don't get to the top in the police by being on the bash squad, you do it by being a detective or these days by working in personnel. So they can just turn around and say "right yeah we'll do it whatever way you like" until they get the say-so to do it they way they like, which is to give everyone an old-fashioned caning.



What's next

With upcoming demos, it remains to be seen if there will be big changes, but the one major thing we've got coming up is water cannon. It's very difficult to tell if they're going to get clearance to go ahead with it. The cops would love new toys and as you can probably guess Boris with his mental age of eight loves toys – it's his whole Christmas.

It's hard to see them being helpful in the setting of major demos in major cities. Notwithstanding examples in Northern Ireland they work in a particular circumstances, not others. In fast moving demos in open areas they don't work, in political demos where we see that the cops can mass kettle people you can make the crowd wet and cold but it's not going to do much.

Perhaps one reason they've been successful in Northern Ireland is that lots of communities are sealed off from each other and small passages that can be blocked off, such as a parade – that's when they're useful. They're not useful for mobile demos, that doesn't work.

In the face of this, lots of LDMG's messages remain the same. When we do legal workshops, if people can walk away remembering they don't have to give their details when they are stop and searched and that they should say no comment if they're arrested then we've achieved a huge amount.

where there's complicated issues of law as well, particularly for protest cases where typically there's issues of human rights, for example Article 10 freedom of expression and 11 on Freedom of Assembly of the Human Rights Act.

Unless there is a radical change to the proposals coming through though we think that getting legal aid in magistrates court is going to be an exception rather than the rule within two to three years. You'll be lucky to get it.

Which means loads of people are going to have to represent themselves.

Obviously the best solution to that is getting lawyers to do it pro bono, for free. Unfortunately there's a limit to that as they have to make a living like the rest of us.

There's a lot of rich lawyers in the world, but they aren't usually the ones doing criminal defence cases at a low level. All the bread and butter of magistrates/low level Crown stuff is done by low-level barristers who just aren't making a lot of money.

What it will effectively do to the intake of barristers is it will stop people who don't have big financial resources behind them like their family from getting in to the profession. So we'll see even more toff barristers, in what is already a very posh industry.

And that's a problem because working-class lawyers are where most activist legal support is drawn from.

The effect of having under-represented defendants will be to slow proceedings even more – the courts hate them as well, even judges who dislike us because most people don't know the rules, the procedures, they get things wrong and have to have things explained to them so it takes more time.

In theory this should all come in for the financial year starting 2016.

As always there may be changes of heart, a new government which might take emergency measures, but without regard to the particulars it's pretty much clear that there is a general programme of austerity and that will continue for the foreseeable future.

Justice support networks

Here's the bit where we beg for money.

Court support costs a lot. It's relatively easy in London where at the worst you're paying a travel card, however for a lot of demos people get arrested in a town where they don't live.

If you're arrested in Brighton, live in London and you need to attend court at 9.30am in the morning you can't take the coach and get there on time, so you're looking at £25 a day travel. In a complicated or drawn-out case, that can mount up.

LDMG has always been funded by people who sue the police, however we have only had three donations in the last year and we think this is because we haven't really publicised it.

There's a lot of people who we hope just don't know, but even if they think that they shouldn't be giving it to LDMG, we've traditionally said if you give 10% to some form of prisoner solidarity, be that us or Anarchist Black Cross, Green and Black Cross or whatever, that will be enough to sustain things.

As the legal and policing situation gets worse and more people need to be represented we might have to be begging even more from people, but that's why it's so important that people who are acquitted or have their cases dropped take the time to sue.

It's not a lot of effort. If you get legal aid, and for this type of civil case you still can, in most instances you will end up doing maybe a day's worth of work, eight hours over a year or two in which you have to go in, give a statement.

Most of these cases don't go to trial, particularly the Met is aware it's an issue and tend to pay out rather than face being embarrassed.

They budget for it, so you can get a situation particularly in the Olympics where they're saying "well it's the Olympics, the government will bail us out."

With something like Tower Hamlets we think it's more the police saying "yeah we're going to do this" and if the government turns round and says it's out of order they'll throw up their hands and say "well we'll just let them fight then."

Over the last couple of years they've averaged £3-4 million in payouts and they should be paying a lot more – we'd like them to.



You're nicked: Confiscated bikes after the Olympics Critical Mass Picture: Diamond Geezer

Legal aid

The coalition withdrawal of legal aid has been a big issue this year but criminal legal aid hasn't really hit the buffers yet as stuff that's being brought in has not yet come in to force.

At the moment you can still get criminal legal aid for the typical people we're talking about who get caught out at demos who are not on a high wage, for anything that goes to crown court and anything that's imprisonable in magistrates court down to obstructing police in the course of their duty.

There's still currently money for stuff

It'll be hard to go to people and say "why don't you become a working-class lawyer and help out your mates" – it takes about five years to become a junior barrister and you'll be on less money than the starting wage of a police community support officer. So it looks like we're going to have to have a lot more people trained as Mackenzie Friends – people who can sit in a court, take notes and give you advice but can't speak on your behalf.

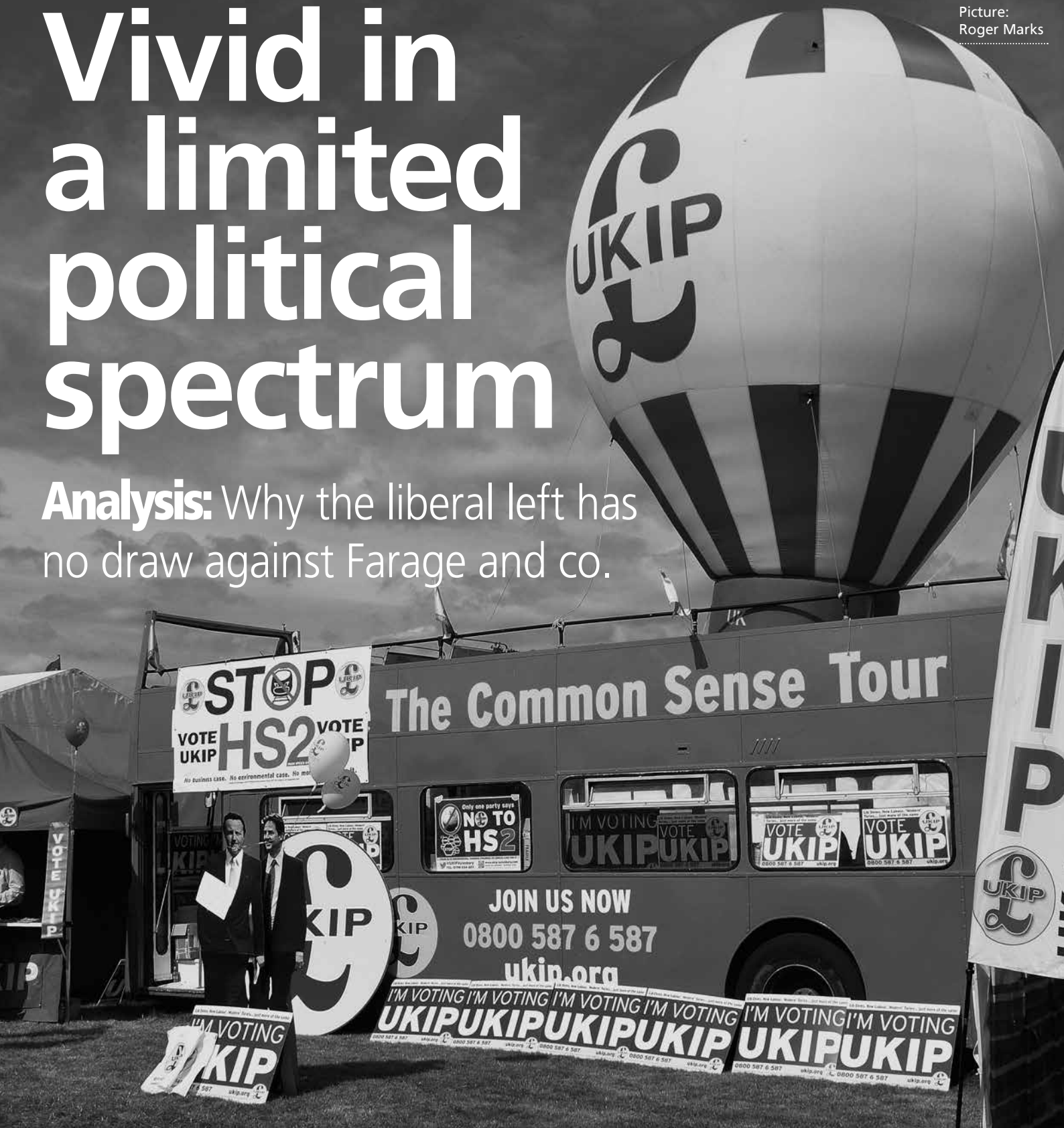
Even a very good MF is not ideal though as a lot of people aren't used to public speaking and courts are very intimidating places to have to do that, particularly when you're own liberty is at stake and you're under a lot of pressure.



Vivid in a limited political spectrum

Picture:
Roger Marks

Analysis: Why the liberal left has no draw against Farage and co.



A few months ago I was picketing a Poundland store on Clayton Street, Newcastle with a group of comrades from the Solidarity Federation and supporters of Boycott Workfare. I'd been having a fairly thorough and amicable conversation with a passerby who had stopped to offer his support as he went about his food shopping.

Our backgrounds and current employment woes were near identical. Northern English, working class, tenants in housing association/council properties, employed on a zero hours contract in an industry centred on precarious work. For around 20 minutes we discussed our hatred of the political class, the damage inflicted

on our communities by austerity capitalism and the paucity of political debate in modern Britain.

Then it happened.

"The thing is, we're up against it at the minute and we don't even have enough resources to go around to look after our own. That's why I'm voting Ukip next time; no-one's looking out for us"

We continued to talk. We went round the usual houses: You've got more in common with the woman from Ghana who cleans your office for minimum wage than you do with your English boss, a vote for Ukip is a vote to make your job even more precarious, far from striking a blow against elitism they act to entrench class hierarchy ... etc.

We parted ways after a few more minutes but I thought about it the rest of that week. Recently I've found I'm having the exact same discussion on picket lines, at work and down the pub. What follows is an attempt to flesh out some of these discussions into a more thorough analysis of why Ukip appeal to certain sections of the working class and the kind of counter arguments we should be offering up as anarchists.

Let's put things in perspective right from the start. The much-vaunted "political



earthquake" that we have repeatedly been told is represented by Ukip's performances in the most recent local and European elections is largely manufactured. While they have secured of 24 of the UK's 73 allocated seats in the European parliament – largely as the result of protest votes, yet still impressive enough – they have had just 157 domestic councillors elected and control no local councils.

While this was an improvement on the previous election (a net change of plus 97), it still places them dead last in terms of their performance alongside the three more established bourgeois parties. Even the beleaguered husk of mediocrities and incapables that is the Lib Dems managed to have 404 councillors elected. In electoral terms then, when viewed as a whole, it's less an earthquake and more of a slightly underwhelming tremor.

As libertarian communists though, we recognise that electoral performances alone are not an adequate way in which to gauge the permeation of ideas and presumptions

liberals to the nominal left of centre don't seem to have worked out that their own brand of more cuddly capitalism can't be dressed up as ultimately being any less ruthless than Ukip's. The scraps offered from either table will lead to the same long term results regardless of the language they are cloaked in or the methods used to get there. The EU's partisan management of European capital is designed to enact free trade agreements, establishing a political and economic orthodoxy that is only cosmetically different to Ukip's dream. Capitalism, whether managed on a European level by technocrats, or on a protectionist nationalist basis by blowhards in pin stripe suits, is still the cause of working class oppressions.

Despite this, Ukip has cross-class appeal. But why would a working class person vote for cuts to social welfare, increased privatisation, tax cuts for the highest earners in society and the dismantling of numerous employment laws and checks on employer exploitation?

working class people is not to be simply scoffed at. That kind of paternalistic hand-wringing fails utterly to contextualise the appeal of right-wing populism amidst the deliberately confined spectrum of liberal democracy.

Within the hopelessly dull and sexless environs of contemporary British politics, Ukip can easily gloss over their non-existent anti-Establishment credentials. In an environment in which the likes of Owen Jones are positioned by liberal broadcast institutions like Newsnight and Question Time as a representative of the hard left, the parameters of the debate are so limited in scope that a risible sexist and racist like Godfrey Bloom can be cast as a libertarian rogue shaking up the technocratic bureaucracy.

It's what political thinker Noam Chomsky is getting at when he points out that "The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum." Bloom and co. are perfectly representative of this.

A reactionary ruling class outgrowth, strident in their commitment to neoliberalism, rendered almost cuddly by the ocean of mediocrity they are surrounded by.

The starting point for any anarchist intervention into the discussions triggered by Ukip's ubiquity should therefore be the same principle we apply when we declare ourselves communists and are confronted with the Russian, Chinese or Cuban experiences of state Marxist-Leninism – our enemy's enemy is not our friend.

The most useful argument we can make is one that explains why we are as fundamentally opposed to the existence of the European Union as we are to the ideas of Ukip. On the most basic level this is about highlighting the fact that every one of the most fundamental blights on working class life can only be exacerbated by the policies advocated by Ukip.

We must emphasise and memorise examples of why they have formed a party that promotes the exclusive interests of the employer over the employee. The Ukip/EU binary is simply a difference of opinion over how the exploitation of the working class should be managed: Bureaucratic, transnational, technocracy or xenophobic, pinstripe-clad isolationism. Either way, our class gains nothing.

As anarchists the best counter to both right-wing populism and any allegations that might be slung back at us of unrealistic idealism must be deeply practical. It doesn't take much digging to expose Ukip policy commitments that if enacted would remove the most basic of employment rights.

Not only do Farage and many of their most visible party members talk openly of their desire to make maternity pay a thing of the past, they also back the scrapping of legislation that criminalises sexual harassment in the workplace. As for holiday pay and sick pay? They are committed to getting rid of that too.

But this is the easy stuff. And it's important to remember that simply relaying this information, especially within a dominant culture that has so successfully cast recipients of benefits or extra financial assistance during times of hardship as a drain on an already weighed



Rewrite: A defaced Ukip poster from 2013

Picture: Ian Burt

that entrench the kind of intersecting oppressions that damage our class on a daily basis. Just because the BNP hasn't swept to power, it doesn't mean we don't live in a deeply racist society. Nor does its electoral inefficiency mean that anti-fascists can rest on their haunches.

The ideas, language and insinuations used by Ukip contribute towards a culture that is most damaging outside of the realm of representative democracy, in the daily lives and everyday experiences of the working class. The preposterously oversaturated coverage they have received from the mainstream media overrides their disappointing electoral results and legitimises their dog whistle racism and free market fetishism.

While Conservatives can easily shift their own policies to fend off the threat,

It's this conundrum that the reformist left has such a hard time coming to terms with. It's what so thoroughly mystifies the "political elite" that Nigel Farage simultaneously represents and constantly decries. It's a feat of some considerable marketing genius to have positioned Ukip as an anti-Establishment force in British politics.

This is, after all, a party born of former Tory party activists who felt that the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 would severely limit the free market aspirations of their cronies in the banking sector. Farage himself is a former low-level City spiv and the party is largely populated with disillusioned former pillars of the ruling class.

But the fact that they have positioned themselves as an alternative to neoliberal hegemony within the minds of many

down austerity economy, isn't going to be enough to convince people that Ukip don't deserve their vote. The current hegemony is pervaded by meanness above all – the longstanding achievements of Thatchero-Blairism.

A potentially more effective tactic is to compare and contrast Ukip's proposals with the outcomes of EU policy and emphasise their similarities – a Ukip vote isn't a vote for change; it's a vote for continuity.

Free trade agreements, like the Transatlantic Trade Partnership that is currently being constructed between the EU and the US, are an attempt to globalise pro-boss legislation, essentially enshrining the ability of corporations to take legal action against governments or unions whose policies or actions might result in a loss of profit for capital.

The logic for the inclusion of legislative sections such as these is the exact same line propounded by "libertarian" blowhards like Farage and Bloom. In it, the most basic of worker rights – whether sick pay, minimum wage, the ability to sue employers for sexual harassment – all of these things can potentially contribute towards a loss in profit, the ultimate evil in the fantasy land inhabited by capitalists that presumes it is corporations, not workers, that create profit.

The only difference between this and Ukip's small business policies is how ambitious in scope it is. A globalisation of the principle that somehow corporations possess an innate human right to garner a profit, or a provincial attempt to strip domestic workers of their rights. The result is the same.

While this reality is helpful to illustrate the hopelessness of the working class committing to either side of the synthetic contrast between Ukip and the EU, it's also useful to emphasise how a party whose appeal is centred around opposition to the disconnected wastefulness of a European managerial elite are not shy about opposing increased transparency and common sense proposals themselves.

They have opposed motions in the European Parliament that aimed to make publication of information relating to lobbyists' relationships with MEP's and how far these groups have influenced policy mandatory.

On top of that they have also decided that proposals for stamping out money laundering and increasing access for the public to EU documents are beyond the pale.

That's not to mention their insistence that motions as practical as updating requirements for lorry and truck designs to

ensure the safety of cyclists and pedestrians, or protecting people embarking on package holidays from being ripped off are some kind of demented Stalinist intrusion.

It's this kind of barely disguised disdain for anything that might impede the ability of their mates in the boss class to turn a profit that we must emphasise the most when we discuss things with potential Ukip supporters.

The most obvious starting point for this kind of a discussion might be Ukip's support for the destructive privatisation of the NHS. While any cogent anarchist analysis of healthcare must stridently critique the centralization and inefficiency of the NHS, it must also acknowledge that free health care at the point of contact is a gain worth fighting tooth and nail to preserve before it can be improved upon in any meaningful way.

Ukip's policy of restructuring healthcare consists of a franchising drive in which the provision of services are available to the highest bidder, most likely outsourcing the responsibilities of state healthcare to

effort to enforce "competitiveness".

Be it the explicit destruction of the NHS propounded by Ukip or the slow death slavish adherence to low-profile EU diktats represented by the mainstream political parties at Westminster, it bears repeating time and again that the resulting implications for those of us not privileged enough to be able to afford private healthcare are disastrous.

Representative democracy can offer no long term bulwark against transnational capital – that can only come through the collective resistance of working class struggle.

Having said that though, we cannot afford to position ourselves as disconnected professional activists or adopt similar rhetoric to patrician liberals.

It's not difficult to convince those in search of a protest vote that Ukip are riddled with bigotry and prejudice – a cursory glance at their crypto-fascist allies in the European parliament and just about any car crash media appearance made by a member of the party is enough for that.



City boy: Nigel Farage in London slicker uniform, FT in hand

Picture: Peter Broster

companies with already egregious records of human rights violations, labour exploitation and, in the case of G4S, murder.

With the chaos of the privatisation of British Rail fresh in the minds of just about anyone who has had to travel via public transport or commute to work in the last two decades, it should not be difficult to demonstrate how policies like these – as well as being virtually identical to those being patiently enacted by the Tories – are ruinous for the wellbeing of the working class. Quite how this sort of thing has the "political elite" quaking in their boots is anyone's guess.

Similarly, EU trade agreements like the ones outlined above, stuffed with characteristic bullshit jargon like "competitive tendering", act to standardise the neoliberal agenda of market ruthlessness by forcing local NHS providers to slug it out with private companies in an

It's far more vital that we are able to outline the specifics of why such a modest political phenomenon cannot seriously profess to be acting independently of the ruling class, and that their policies and rhetoric actually entrench attacks on those of us who rely on the sale of our labour to survive.

Once we have outlined such a case, we can move on to widening the discussions we have with our fellow workers, claimants and members of our communities into a more far reaching one that encompasses the futility of participating in the charade of representative democracy and begin the work of organising democratically for direct action against our class enemies.



The current hegemony is pervaded by meanness above all – the longstanding achievements of Thatchero-Blairism.

By
Anonymous



Perspective: Edinburgh Anarchists

For the most part anarchist groups didn't offer official positions on the independence debate. Below are extracts from an article by Edinburgh Anarchists, the original can be found at edinburghanarchists.noflag.org.uk.

We neither mourn nor celebrate. The scaremongering of the No campaign would likely have proved largely unfounded. So too would the promises of the Yes campaign. In reality our lives would have continued mostly as they did before in either event. We will trudge to the same jobs we hate along the same roads, through the same congestion on the same expensive transport. We'll do so so we can pay our wages back to the capitalist class in the same shops, to pay rent to the same landlords and mortgages to the same banks.

... It has become popular amongst some on the pro-independence to claim that even in defeat politics has been radically altered. People are engaged with politics for the first time, turnout was 85%. A new broad popular social movement is born, the referendum was never about a vote for the Nationalists (capital N1). The campaign they built to push for independence will now re-orient itself against the Scottish and British governments and push for material concessions, emboldened by how close they came and bringing newly radicalised people with them. But a high turnout in itself tells us very little of what will come next, the complacency that we have already changed politics is dangerous. Leaving aside the tactical mistake of offering the SNP the support they wanted to pass the referendum and then hoping to win concessions rather than making those concessions a precondition of support, this seems at best an optimistic prediction, which is far from certain to be realised. It is highly probable that the movement built to advance a radical case for independence will fail to maintain the unity it has shown pre-referendum.

... Perhaps the most debilitating effect of the referendum campaign was its draw away from other, more meaningful, sites of struggle – the boycott warfare campaign, anti-deportations and pro migrant work, environmental organising and so on. Of course, that is not to say that no independence campaigners continued their engagement with these causes, but no one has unlimited time and energy to contribute.

... The better society that had been pinned on independence doesn't need a new state. We have a world to win and only our own working class self-activity and organisation will secure it.

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In the weeks running up to the referendum result stalls sprung up in housing estates, in inner city deprived areas.

An awakening had occurred. Thousands previously not on the Electoral Roll registered – 7,500 in Dundee alone.

Many on the Yes side became intoxicated by the possibility of winning. In the aftermath, like Alec Salmond, they will have come down to earth with as bump.

Many in the process of persuading folk to embrace Yes increasingly left any radical or socialist perspective on the back burner. The Yes utopia was a Scandinavian social democracy that is now more myth than reality.

Many anarchists,⁽¹⁾ especially those primarily drawn to “activism,” embraced the Yes message. The appeal of hope struck a chord not in areas traditionally attracted to Scottish nationalism. The only Yes majorities were recorded from Dumbarton to Dundee.

Labour, in alliance with loyalism and the well-to-do enclaves, lost the vote in Glasgow and in North Lanarkshire. It is highly likely that this mood of hope amongst the “left behind” will evaporate. The 55-45% vote drawn from a record turnout of 84% is emphatic. It may be decades before any similar vote occurs.

The activists in Radical Independence,⁽²⁾ Women for Independence, National Coalition etc. will try to gather up these disaffected into a movement which challenges the SNP from the left.

Amongst the young this may have some success, but creating a longer term grassroots alternative in the schemes will be undermined by the extent of the No vote. Within hours of the result the SNP, as the party of government at Holyrood, has already refocussed on ensuring that promised new powers for “enhanced devolution”⁽³⁾ are delivered by Westminster.

How was a No majority achieved? The votes of the wealthy, die-hard loyalists were a tiny minority. Those that doubted the Yes case were families paying mortgages who had some stake in the system, the majority of pensioners, and rural Scotland (even in SNP seats).

Any change that they might favour is

O

So what now for Scotland?



Split: A No vote may impact at grassroots level

limited, materialism rules and any distrust of bankers or loss of confidence in the economic system that existed a few years back has dissipated in favour of a desire for security.

Some revolutionaries didn't get sucked into an agenda shrouded in nationalism, no matter how “progressive” it was painted. They are a reservoir of internationalism and class based politics. The IWW in Scotland is one of these agencies.⁽⁴⁾

All shades of opinion will be seeking to forsake the gloom that may pervade Scottish politics. A return to normality, “the same shit” where the only “X” that counts is exploitation.

A lot of imagination will be needed to engage with those whose hope for change is now dashed.

By
Keith M



References

1. See as counter weight libcom.org/library/beyond-scottish-referendum
2. Will “federalism” have it's day, an English Parliament like Cardiff, Edinburgh or Belfast. But in whose interest will “English” be fostered over “North-East”, Yorkshire, Cornwall etc.?
3. Radical Independence Campaign, led, but not

synonymous especially outside cities, with Chris

4. IWW Scotland are often at odds with low-key syndicalism in English General Member branches of the Industrial workers of the world and publish Strike Back newsletter iwwscotland.wordpress.com.

Clicktivism – politics without participation

When did we stop fighting?

The onslaught by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s was hideous, but from the miners strike to the Liverpool Dockers we fought back. Recent memoirs of Tory ministers from the time show how nervous the government was, despite their rhetoric. We certainly did not win every battle but we showed them there was a price to be paid and we set some lines down.

Roll forward three decades and what the Tories and their Lib Dem mates are now doing is much, much worse than Thatcher. She wouldn't have dared privatise the NHS for example, but this lot are happy to farm contracts out to the private sector to provide core services like cancer care.

A third of community services are now delivered by non-NHS providers. No-one voted for NHS privatisation, in fact during the last election, Cameron said "no more reform". It's not just the health service and privatisation. Welfare reform. Fiscal policy. Public spaces, libraries, community spaces ... It's bad. Really bad. The bottom fifth of Britain's population are amongst the poorest in Europe.

Capitalism is weak, but we are weaker. Go back ten years and look at the number of national and local anarchist groups. Compare that to now. The word collapse is appropriate. Of course the authoritarian left, particularly the SWP have experienced a similar fall and rightfully so, but anarchists have not stepped into the gap. If we once thought that we only needed people to understand what the trots were really about, which goodness knows the recent history of the SWP shows, to rush into our arms then we now know we were wrong.

Why is that?

Frankly I am a bit baffled. Perhaps feminism gives us a clue. Lucy Bates' recent book catalogues an alarming number of stories drawn from Twitter (#everydaysexism) and the Everyday Sexism Project website showing the routine abuse experienced by women. Social media and the web provides a platform to gather this information. What it does not do and Bate's book does not do is provide analysis and answers.

If activism is increasingly virtual this is a problem. Kropotkin wouldn't have been able to explain his theory of mutual aid in 157 characters.

The Oxford English Dictionary describes "clicktivism" as the use of social media and other online methods to promote a cause or idea.

But "promote a cause" makes activism sound as exciting as standing for the parish council. This is activism as marketing. Politics following the logic of the marketplace. Let's not make a placard let's download a screen saver. Clicktivism is hampering radical politics.

My family come from Newbury and were

heavily involved in the anti-bypass campaign in the early 1990s – a fight that over 1,000 people were arrested in and anarchists took an active, indeed prominent part.

Earlier this year (2014) an impromptu demo was called to mark the anniversary of what came to be known as The Third Battle of Newbury. It was advertised on Facebook. Thirty or so people indicated they would go. More said they liked it. How many actually turned up? One.

of them in a concrete sense. Clicktivism does not work. It does not change anything. We would not have defeated the poll tax with well-designed websites.

There is another point. Not everyone is able to sit in a cafe sipping artisan coffee while zapping off emails on their iPad complaining about global climate change. Access to technology is uneven, and snooping endemic.

The fad, which is what I think it is, of



Large numbers: But concrete action has not boomed even alongside apparent online success

The demo was built in the same way that a new breakfast cereal might be launched. It was "advertised" on Facebook. In the virtual world lots of "likes" equals success. In the real world success equals lots of people turning up to a demo. There is no commitment in clicktivism however, other than tapping a key board.

The problem is we are asking less and less of people. Signing however many change.org e-petitions is not going to change the world even if people do open them. Clicktivism is easy, in fact lazy, politics. By liking a page we can feel we have done something when we have done nothing.

Online campaigns might have, in some cases, millions of members but few do much, it's a bit like a teenager boasting about how many followers they have on Twitter when they do not actually know any

online activism has been alienating people from activity itself. There is certainly a growing backlash against clicktivism and hope that a new generation will recognise the importance of doing. If there is one radical ideology that celebrates participation it is anarchism.

Of course technology has a place. I am not suggesting going off grid but we need to be critical of virtual activism and see the danger that adopting the logic of capitalism (marketing, promoting, advertising) to campaigning creates. We do not want to be passive consumers.

Time to get out from behind the screen.

By Richard Griffin



The unheralded fall

Ah, the joy of low expectations! What else allows the coalition to proclaim that austerity has been vindicated because growth appears to be back, wages (finally) outstripping inflation by 0.1% in April 2014 and the deficit cut by a third.

Before popping the cork on the Champagne though, let's place a few things into the Memory Hole.

Let us forget that this 0.1% wage increase above inflation was for one month and existed only if you use the lowest measure of inflation (RPI) and include bonuses – otherwise real wages dropped. In fact, wages were slightly lower in April 2014 than in December 2013. Real wages have fallen year-on-year to be over 10% lower than in 2008.

The next set of figures, showing a return to the new normal of real-wage falls was only quietly mentioned in passing. As were all the other reports, including that of wage growth at 0.6%, a third of inflation, in September.

Let us forget that in 2010 Osborne proclaimed a “formal mandate” in which “the structural current deficit should be in balance [by] 2015-16”. January 2013 saw Osborne boasting that he had “reduced the deficit by a quarter in just two years” but four years earlier he had attacked a Labour plan to cut it by a quarter in two years. He used 2013's Autumn Statement to proudly proclaim that the UK will no longer have a budget deficit by 2018-9 – a mere four years behind schedule.

Let us forget that the economy should, according to Tory promises, have been growing robustly by now. In 2010 it grew more than the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) expected (1.7% against 1.2%), reflecting the previous Labour government's Keynesian-lite policies, but the Con-Dems happily took the credit). Then they started implementing their policies and growth plummeted, as shown by OBR forecasts made the month after the Tories failed to win the General Election compared to the actual figures:

2011: 2.3% (1.1%)
2012: 2.8% (0.3%)
2013: 2.9% (1.7%)

Let us forget that instead of the cumulative 7.1% forecast, the economy grew by less than half that (3.2%). Yes, the economy may have exceeded its previous peak in early 2014 (being a massive 0.2% bigger than seven years previously) but this is two years later than the 2010 plan.

Let us forget that wage growth predictions were also out – 1.2% against -0.8% in reality in 2012 and 2.9% (-1.1%) in 2013. Real wages have been dropping consistently since 2010 and while at the time real wages were forecast to reach their pre-recession level in 2013, it now now stretched out to 2018.

Let us forget that that GDP per capita is



Austerity flim-flam: Osborne's measures have failed to hit targets Picture: altogetherfool

not expected to exceed its pre-crisis peak until 2017 or 2018.

Let us forget how the benefits of that (slow) growth have been distributed.

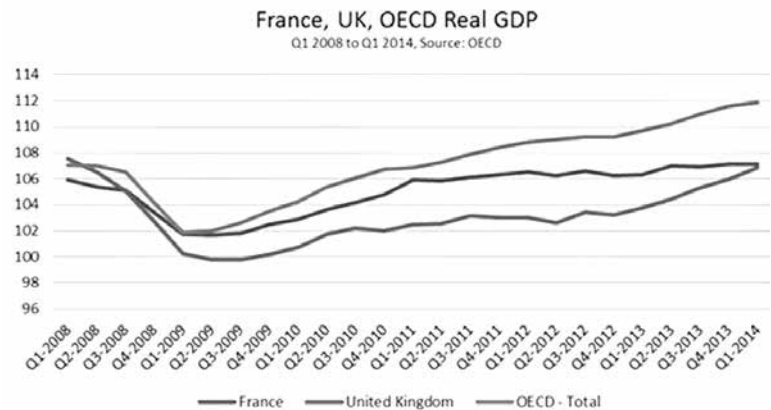
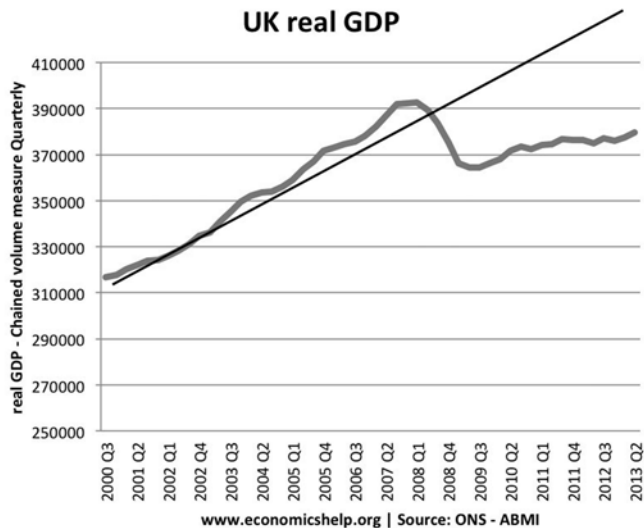
Let us forget that Osborne's self-contradictory attempts to blame low growth

on problems in the Eurozone – caused by Europe's embracing of coalition-backed austerity – were only convincing to the party faithful.

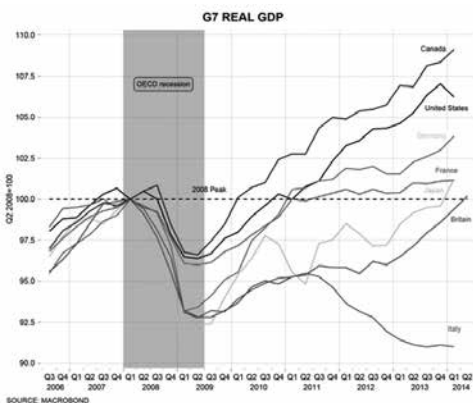
Let us forget that this is the longest recovery in living memory. The 1974 slump

of Osborne's plan A

In focus: Has austerity worked? Recent statistics, and the chancellor's quiet U-turns, suggest otherwise



The stats: The right-wing holy grail of economics, GDP, has not performed well in austerity Britain, which places sixth out of the G7 nations in terms of growth



public debt of more than 90% of GDP sees economic growth drop off sharply.

Forget all that! Forget the lost decade produced by Austerity policies. The key thing is that growth has returned, a corner has been turned. Indeed, Osborne has proclaimed so many corners turned that he has – finally! – returned to where he started. Growth rates are similar to those inherited by the Con-Dem coalition when it scrapped into office.

Austerity vindicated?

Have these four years confirmed the wisdom of austerity? First we need to recap the arguments.

Proponents proclaimed the inevitability of expansive austerity. Cuts would show “the markets” that sensible people were in charge and growth would return quickly. Moreover, economic science showed that high public debt impacted negatively on the economy.

Nonsense, said the critics. Austerity during a recession would make things worse, delaying the recovery and causing more pain and suffering as it assumes that the worst thing you can do to a firm in a recession is to buy goods from it. While the neo-classical mainstream may conclude that austerity is the best policy, it did not work in the 1930s Great Depression and would not now. Reducing aggregate demand by cutting wages or reducing government services would reduce spending, increase uncertainty, reduce investment and so prolong the slump.

So what happened? Osborne inherited

an expanding economy and promptly killed growth with his ideologically-driven imposition of austerity.

The scale of the underperformance is staggering. In June 2010 the OBR predicted that by 2014 GDP would be about 7% larger and the all-important deficit fallen by two-thirds. In reality, the economy has grown at less than a half of that rate while deficit reduction is nowhere near original projections. Back in 2010, Osborne asserted that Labour lacked “a credible plan to reduce their record deficit” yet his performance was slower than the one he denounced as a “reckless gamble”. It was meant to be £60 billion by 2013-14 while Labour aimed for £85bn and he wishes to be lauded that it was a mere £111bn.

Then there is the credit rating downgrade by Moody's in February 2013. Three years previously Osborne had declared his “first benchmark is to cut the deficit more quickly to safeguard Britain's credit rating” while in August 2009 he had proclaimed that “Britain faces the humiliating possibility of losing its international credit rating.” Come the downgrade and it was no big deal.

Of course, only a cretin would consider Moody – the agency that gave AIG an AAA rating a month before it collapsed – as worth listening to. Yet this is precisely what Osborne did.

Remember, also, that the 2010 OBR forecast already had their estimates

took three years for the economy to finally return to its pre-recession level. Thatcher's Monetarist slump of the early 1980s took four years. Lawson's boom/bust of the late 1980s took two-and-a-half years. This time it has taken over six. Worse, other, similar, economies reached their pre-crisis peak years before Britain – including despised France.

Let us forget that British GDP is currently around 15% below its pre-recession trend.

Let us forget that the key intellectual basis for austerity, a 2010 paper by economists Reinhart and Rogoff titled *Growth in a Time of Debt*, was discovered in early 2013 to be based on Excel spreadsheet errors, unusual and highly questionable statistical methods and the omission of some data. Once these were corrected, there was no evidence to support its claim, as quoted by both the International Monetary Fund and the UK Treasury to justify austerity, that



of austerity embodied within it, as its director noted in March 2013 when forced to publicly correct Cameron: "For the avoidance of doubt, I think it is important to point out that every forecast published by the OBR since the June 2010 Budget has incorporated the widely-held assumption that tax increases and spending cuts reduce economic growth in the short term."

Plan A failed in its own terms. Its negative impact on growth has been much greater than expected. Thus it was economic illiteracy that drove the Financial Times to publish a leader in September 2013 entitled "Osborne wins the battle on austerity." This ignored the awkward fact that the critics

and replaced by the Plan B Osborne denied having. While the government claims that the pace of fiscal consolidation has not changed and its spending cuts have continued as planned, the facts tell a different story.

Most of the initial deficit reduction came from cutting public sector net investment (spending on schools, roads etc) roughly in half, the rest from tax increases. Plan A was implemented in 2010 (state borrowing dropping from 9.5% to 7.9%), the economy promptly stalled and faced with the predicted consequences of his own policies, Osborne did what any self-respecting politician would do: he implemented Plan B while still talking about imposing Plan A.



NHS threat: Protesters at Block The Bridge in Westminster, London

Picture: Wasi Danij

argued that austerity meant delaying the recovery, not that it would never happen.

Has austerity been vindicated? By the standards Osborne himself set out in his "unavoidable budget" in June 2010 the answer is a simple and resounding "no".

Yes, the economy is now performing better than forecasts but only because of the awkward fact that the forecasts were repeatedly revised in response to the "unexpected" flat-lining of the real economy.

The anti-austerians have apparently been "silenced" – by being proven completely correct.

From A to B

The Financial Times has implied in its leaders that the coalition's Plan A is still in place – in fact it has been put on hold

The OBR was more forthcoming, with its chair admitting in March 2013: "Deficit reduction appears to have stalled". Its figures confirm this, with public sector net borrowing as a percentage of GDP at:

2009-10: 9.5%
2011-12: 7.9%
2012-13: 7.8%
2013-14: 7.5%

Moody's downgrading was thus justified because of the government's "reduced political commitment to fiscal consolidation".

This is why we get reports of "unexpected" increases in borrowing by Osborne. For example, June 2014 saw borrowing total £11.4bn, higher than the £10.7bn forecast by economists and £3.8bn more than in June 2013. When a one-off cash transfer from the

Bank of England in June 2013 is removed, borrowing in the first three months of the 2014-15 fiscal year was £36.1bn, 7.3% higher than the same period last year. That this was the latest of a regular event went mostly unmentioned.

His preening on the vindication of austerity is doubly wrong: A recovery was almost inevitable and helped along because he put austerity on hold. Public spending has increased from £633bn in 2009 and after four years of supposed "austerity" it rose to £718bn. So what Osborne fails to mention is that the recovery we are now having owes much to this unpublished easing of austerity between 2011 and 2013.

Indeed, so much of Plan A has been postponed to after the next election (60%, in fact) that the post-2015 government will be making the deepest cuts since 1948 if it wishes to keep to Osborne's spending plans (which Labour has pledged to).

Unlike the real cuts imposed on Greeks or Spaniards, Britain has seen mostly rhetoric. Yet if the state's borrowing was not fundamentally changed, how it spent this money did. Many state programs have been slashed, but state borrowing and spending have not.

As with Thatcher, local government has suffered with annual cuts of up to 15%, producing real cuts in services people need – day centres for the elderly, childcare, sports clubs, museums and theatres.

These and £25bn in benefit cuts are more than matched however by what Osborne has given away in personal tax allowances, petrol duties and corporation tax cuts – not to mention subsidising employers by topping up poverty wages by benefits and landlords by housing benefit.

Money can be found for the right things – like waging war or Tory pet projects. Cameron's election pledge busting top-down "reform" of the NHS cost at least £3bn (while its front line staff denied a modest pay "rise") while Universal Credit's whole-life cost was revealed last year to be at least £12.8bn, over £10bn more than Department of Work and Pensions originally said it would.

Low Expectations: Osborne's Plan C

It is useful to remind ourselves how we got into this mess, given how successfully the Tories and their media have been in rewriting the past.

According to Cameron, the "deficit didn't suddenly appear purely as a result of the global financial crisis. It was driven by persistent, reckless and completely unaffordable government spending and borrowing over many years." He forget to mention that before the crisis he had promised to match the public spending by Labour which he now denounces as profligate. Still, some manage to forget about the global financial crisis and suggest it is all Labour's fault.

While it may suit the Con-Dems to suggest Labour produced an unwarranted increase in the level of government debt, the awkward fact is that before the global recession Britain's debt to GDP ratio was slightly lower than when Labour took office. Then there is the awkward fact that in 2007 Labour borrowed £37.7bn, of which £28.3bn was invested in big projects (the balance of £9.4bn represents the current

budget deficit) while in 2013 the Con-Dems borrowed £91.5bn, with just £23.7bn invested.

Government debt rose as a result of the global recession due to having to bail out the bankers as well as through a natural fall in government income and rise in expenditures in a slump (such as rising unemployment benefit costs). To ignore the role of derivatives, sub-prime lending, speculative bubbles, and general renterism-run-wild and suggest that the global economic crash was caused by British welfare spending should be considered risible, but sadly in what passes for British intellectual discussion in the media it is not.

It was private debt that got us into the crisis, but this should not be viewed in isolation. Inequality has exploded since 1979 and this has contributed by making demand for goods weaker, so increasing the necessity of credit to supplement wages and making the needed debt-repayments more fragile.

A firm recovery would be based on reducing inequality and bolstering demand by raising wages and benefits, but all these things are hated by the Tories. Hence the apparently paradoxical fact that starting with the emergency budget in 2010 their plans had an underlying assumption of increased personal debt. That assumption in the face of an economic crisis was always unrealistic due to rising uncertainty (and corresponding unlikelihood to lend) and falling demand (with corresponding unwillingness to increase debt payments) and so it came to be.

While Cameron proclaimed that critics of austerity “think there’s some magic money tree” in fact his government is trying to encourage individuals and firms to borrow more. They do that when the cost of borrowing is very cheap and this is why the Bank of England base rate has been at rock-bottom for the last seven years.

Why, then, does it not believe it’s a “magic money tree” moment when the private sector borrows more to invest in projects when the cost of borrowing is cheap but think that it is when the government does the same thing? Why, after denouncing the evils of state debt, would the Tories seek to bolster private debt?

Private debt will face higher interest rates than public debt and so will generate more income for the rentier section of the capitalist class. Private debt also weighs down those subject to it and they are unlikely to become rebels – debt-ridden workers face more than just lost wages in a strike, they face losing much of what they mistakenly consider their own.

Expectations change however and after sufficient time what were previously considered historically bad levels can – and do – become the new normal. Banks’ lower levels of lending get repaid, encouraging more loans to be given and slowly the makings of an upswing (and new crisis) start. While heroic levels of individual debt were not forthcoming initially the fact is that debt often has to be taken up simply in order for working class people to survive – the explosion of payday lenders is proof enough of that. This process was aided, of course, by the normal Tory response to a

the failure of a high-profile council to be background of an election. The time for such collapses is just after re-taking office with five years to work out how to blame Labour for it.

Mission Accomplished?

So austerity has failed against its stated goals and there are obvious political reasons why Osborne is declaring that Plan A has been vindicated. Yet the stated goals were for public consumption: austerity was being driven for other, ideological and class,



Calling the shots: Alisher Usmanov, the richest man in Britain

Picture: Gulustan

crisis – state aid to inflate a housing bubble.

Expectations do not nullify the need to produce and realise surplus value, but decisions by capitalists, such as when to invest, are not taken on auto-pilot. The expectations of those making the decisions are a factor and these are influenced by many things including the state of the economy, the level of class struggle, the recent past, etc.

A level of stable demand (as provided by the state, for example) can be a decisive factor in a crisis – something lost on those who fail to understand Keynes and the basic difference between the uncertain demand of the market and the certain demand provided by state policies (like the SWP, which recently published a review of Paul Krugman’s book *End this Depression Now!* rooted in a mechanistic viewpoint worthy of Second International Marxism).

So the Tories have been helped by low expectations, and are doing their best to encourage them by showing general incompetence. This has produced the bizarre situation that retroactively avoiding a double-dip recession by the June 2013 revision of growth figures for the first quarter of 2012 from -0.1% to 0% was considered “good news” for the Chancellor.

However Osborne may look stupid but he is not. The last thing he wants in the run-up to an election is to have the economy being run-down by his austerity policies. Hence the shift to Plan B while maintaining the rhetoric of Plan A.

Similarly, that he has shifted the impact of austerity to after the next election is equally understandable – you do not want

interests. So it is not austerity as such, just the rhetoric of austerity while – as usual – the Tories grind the face of the working class into the dirt.

In this it has been an amazing success – aided by the failure in its stated goals for the flat-lining of the economy and lack of resistance from the masses has allowed the Tories to undermine the welfare state, erode real wages and enrich the few.

According to this year’s Sunday Times “Rich List”, the combined fortune of Britain’s richest 1,000 people doubled compared to five years ago rising from £258bn in 2009 to hit a new high of £519bn (equivalent to a third of the nation’s economic output). This is up 15.4% from 2013’s total of £450bn.

Whether this was equivalent to the increase in food-bank use was not mentioned, but the compiler of the Rich List proclaimed he had “never seen such a phenomenal rise in personal wealth as the growth in the fortunes of Britain’s 1,000 richest people over the past year. The richest people in Britain have had an astonishing year.” By strange coincidence, real wages fell over the same period and government figures showed that Britain’s richest 1% had accumulated as much wealth as the poorest 55% put together.

Like Milton Friedman, as Osborne helped make the rich richer he will be remembered fondly in elite circles as good at his job – in spite of being proved completely wrong.



The Tories have been helped by low expectations, and are doing their best to encourage them

By Iain McKay



A better way for

Breathing Utopia: A school teacher looks at how his industry might change, after the revolution

How can I frame what I think education in a post-revolutionary society would look like?

It'd probably help if I start by saying what I mean in terms of revolution. I'm wary of talking about blueprints for anarchist societies, but if we're talking about a proletarian revolution we're talking about one where workers and communities have control of industry and that would include schools. Those are ours. We built them as a class, and we'll get to use and remake them as we see fit.

I think our schools would be much more embedded in communities. At the minute, and especially with academies and free schools, they're seen as sort of a weird, parachuted, almost hermetically sealed thing – it's more a service that's given into the community.

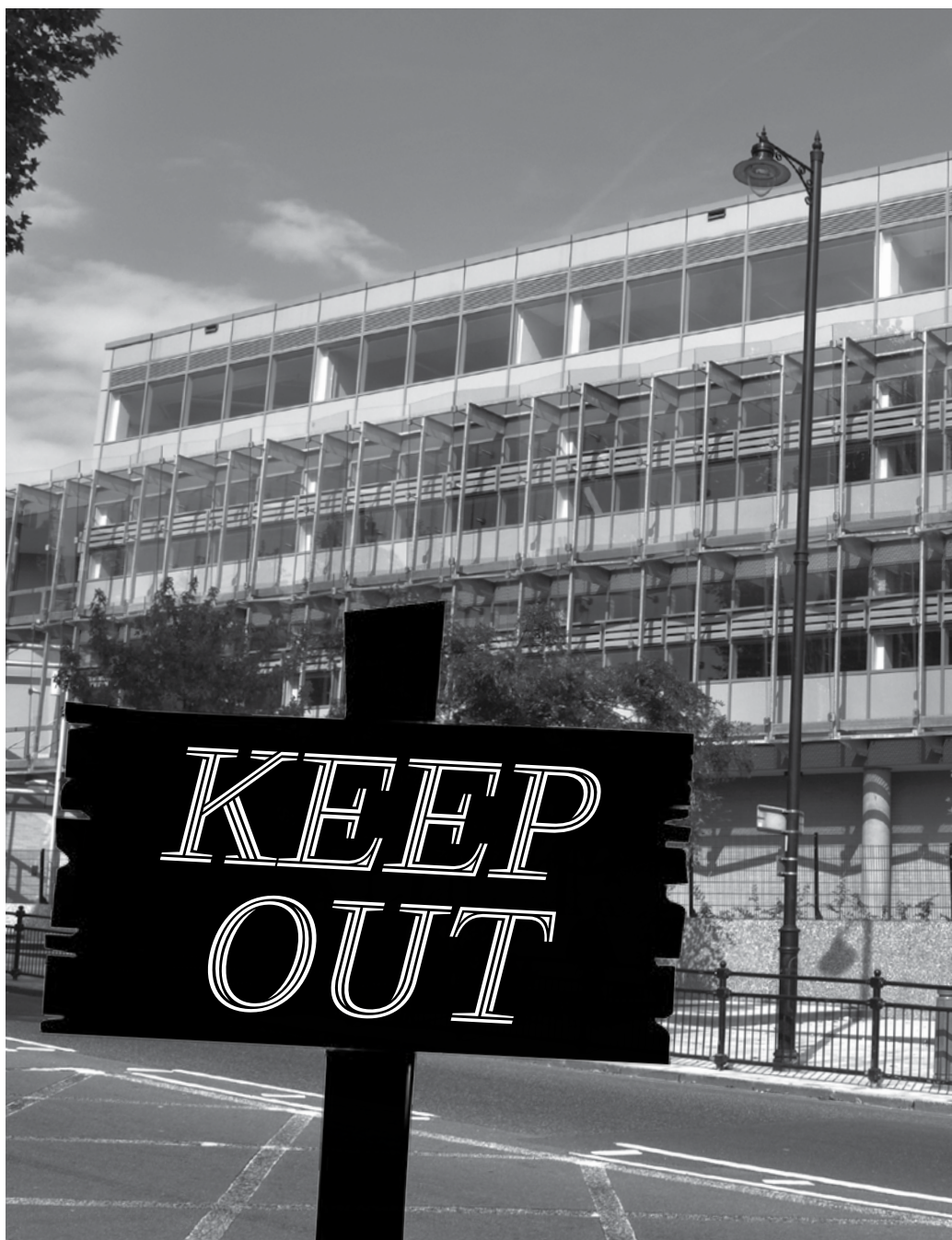
When you see fences around the new schools and the CCTV, swipecards, everyone has to have ID including the 12-year-olds, that erects a mental and very real physical barrier to the community, there's an element of mistrust there.

So there's a list of those and related things that wouldn't exist in schools, which might include uniforms for example. There's no rationale for them outside of a capitalist society.

The two common justifications here are things like discipline and literal uniformity – get people used to it because that's what they're going to get for the rest of their lives anyway. You're all the same, you're not unique or special or an individual – that's good training for the workplace.

And there's the fitting in argument for uniforms, saying “no-one will know who's rich and who's poor.” Which doesn't make sense if everyone's needs are met, it doesn't work outside of capitalist social relations.

Meanwhile an economic argument is used to justify larger class sizes. Many of the behavioural problems that we experience in schools with teenagers is to do with fitting kids into classes of 25, 30, which we know



Cut off: New model schools such as Hackney Academy are isolated and constantly monitored

isn't a conducive environment to having good teacher-student relationships.

Head teachers might argue, but all the credible studies point that way.

You can see the difference between when there's ten kids in a room and when there's 30. But they do it because economies of scale insist that we have massive numbers of kids crammed into a small building and that's where lots of problems come from. It's where a lot of the resentment comes from, the discipline system.

It's no good in terms of learning anything and it increases the amount of discipline you have to enact, and that's the thing that most people, unless they're sociopaths,

don't like doing, but that's the logic of capitalism.

If we lived in a society where people's needs were met and there wasn't the drive for profit in the way that there is now though I would imagine that class sizes would be a lot smaller, the things you could do would be a lot more fulfilling.

We also wouldn't have things like endless testing. We wouldn't have the labels and numerical values which kids internalise.

I mean that's done from the age of four, inception year. Students have labels put on them – you're a level four, you're a level three, that sort of thing. And they internalise it, they talk about themselves and they talk

teaching children



These are the things that worry people in schools at the minute. They serve no purpose other than disciplining people in capitalist schools, and their effect is disastrous.

On traditional anarchist conceptions of education: Peer learning and breaking with didactic models

There's a really weird thing about anarchism and education because the thing about student-centred learning and teachers as facilitators, that's common parlance in schools now. These things have been easily co-opted by capitalist schooling.

I always find it really weird that people bring it up because you won't find a head teacher who doesn't nod his head when you say 'student centred learning' or that teachers should be facilitators rather than didactic deliverers. That's even what Ofsted try to make us all do.

I've seen peer-centred learning and I've seen how Ofsted use it – "oh there wasn't enough group work" – they can use it as a stick to beat you with.

People mistake the form of learning for the function.

But these things don't work inside capitalist schools, the task is a socio-economic one rather than a philosophical one and solutions would have to come after.

You can walk into the strictest of academies and see kids doing student-centred group work and a teacher just

to you, saying things like "which class are we in, which set are we in," and I always say it doesn't really matter, we're all learning the same work, but they ask these things and they internalise these labels, and they know they're in the "top class" or "bottom set."

Sometimes we treat them as though they're silly but they know what the labels mean and they behave in accordance. They say things like "I can't do this, I'm in the dumb class. And that's kind of heartbreaking, because you're just like "no this is just really interesting and you can do it" – but that becomes the rationale for education, not instilling an interest in a subject but advancing through this level system.

And all that makes sense for league tables of schools, but it serves absolutely no practical purpose other than to maintain discipline, that's what it's used for.

And not only is it used to discipline children it's used to discipline us as teachers, because if we don't get to a certain level by the end of the year it affects our performance reviews.

With performance-related pay coming in it's really easy for managers to keep you down, they just give you a bad review and say "you know what, I'm not going to sack you, we're just not going to give you your increment this year."

And that does scare people, people who might want to start a family, who are kind of reliant on a bit of extra in their pay packet.



checking in on them, but teachers' wages are still being depressed, the classroom's still dirty, the school still has a bloody sponsor to appease.

I think a lot of the classic anarchist approaches have already been co-opted by capitalist centres of learning because they don't really challenge the existing social relationship that capitalism's based on.

Dealing with difficult kids

Well I don't have much experience with Special Education Needs (SEN) but we do have a wide spectrum of types of kids. So almost every class will have one or two kids who say are at various places along the autistic spectrum, with tourettes, social difficulties, speech and language, considered to have a variety of barriers to their achievement and so on.

I keep coming back to this but I think class sizes is huge when it comes to this stuff. The amount of distraction and noise

I mean I can tell when a kid isn't into what I'm teaching, that's not their fault, they're just not into finding out how electricity is generated or whatever, but then they do something they're good at, like an art portfolio or playing sports, and they're just transformed.

Schools don't facilitate that because they ask kids to follow a timetable, doing things which are useful for the next generation of workplace fodder and labourers. Really basic, generic, transferable skills.

And this isn't even conspiracy talking, this is what the schools themselves will tell you. They'll say it in assembly to kids, when they're talking to parents, "we need to equip our learners for a life of work".

And they listen to business and they listen to industry, which says there's not enough literacy or IT skills or whatever it is, and even beyond schools, at university, you see the closure of departments which can't justify themselves in those sorts of economic terms.

more interested rather than a whole load of kids who aren't interested and don't want to learn that particular thing.

I think it's about looking to how people learn what are quite complex sets of skills and it's often not really that didactic, learning is a process of doing, that doesn't mean you don't occasionally sit and quietly reflect about ideas as well but that can be much more of a discussion, Q&As, back and forth.

I don't know how you do the light-independent phases of photosynthesis, it's really hard to cut open a leaf and look inside a chloroplast. I mean I'm getting a bit facetious but there are specialist types of things where it's like you can't really do them and we sometimes sound like it'll all be a big fun fair where we're all playing in sandpits, but it wouldn't be that, sometimes you have to sit and listen to someone who knows what they're talking about, because it's really hard.

But that's okay because there should be difference and people will be able to say "you know, so what, listening isn't the issue because we call each other by our names, an open system would help to break down that barrier.

If we look at the recruitment of teachers specifically today, the common trajectory is the graduate who doesn't know what to do with their life bums around a bit and then decides to become a teacher. Very few people I've spoken to who are teachers dreamed of being teachers, I certainly didn't.

Even within the logic of capitalism though they do often teach things they like and they're often very good at it – history teachers really like history, music teachers play in a jazz band. But then equally there's those who are just doing it for a job and I can understand that, I mean we all have to pay rent. But when you remove that need, then I'd imagine that everyone in that sort of institution would be pursuing their interests. There would be scientists, and artists and musicians with a real passion in what they're doing.

I can imagine that in a post-revolutionary society people would be doing teaching as one of the things they want to do and that would be the case across the board. I mean obviously socially necessary things would need doing as well, the bins still need taking out and we'd all be doing our time putting in... though obviously there's a limit to that as well – I'd quite like a brain surgeon to be mostly doing brain surgery.

So it'd be much more like me asking you as an expert in the thing your passionate about to explain something that you know and I don't, and I'll listen until it makes sense.

And even the most didactic parts would be like that, with parents involved in these conversations as well. They might want to come in and learn too for that matter, I don't see why we'd have a limit on these institutions with one for kids, one for teachers, one for adults.

Maybe if they want to come in and learn a bit of science, or music, or history, they can do that. So it would be truly community education rather than education for work.



Lessons co-opted: Summerhill in Suffolk offered a progressive model

is a stimulus overload, which can result in being in a massive classroom with lots of kids can be very different when you speak to them on their own. Demeanour changes and it makes problems come up less often in the first place.

I've taught a lot of "bad kids" and they're completely different if you speak to them one-to-one or in very small groups. Every kid's different and personally, I use a lot of humour, I'm not a strict disciplinarian, it's not who I am.

I'm known as a good teacher and that's partly because I'm passionate about my subject and it gets me a long way. I kind of know what I'm talking about. But if I'm made to cover something I don't give a shit about it definitely changes my teaching, I actually have to be more of a disciplinarian – I'm not confident in it.

When I'm doing my subject I can talk about it all day and that goes a lot of the way to dealing with the behaviour stuff actually. And this is something that post-revolution might be a major change. If people are teaching things they enjoy and are passionate about, kids wouldn't even view them as teachers, they'd just see them as "this person loves what they're doing" and that's infectious.

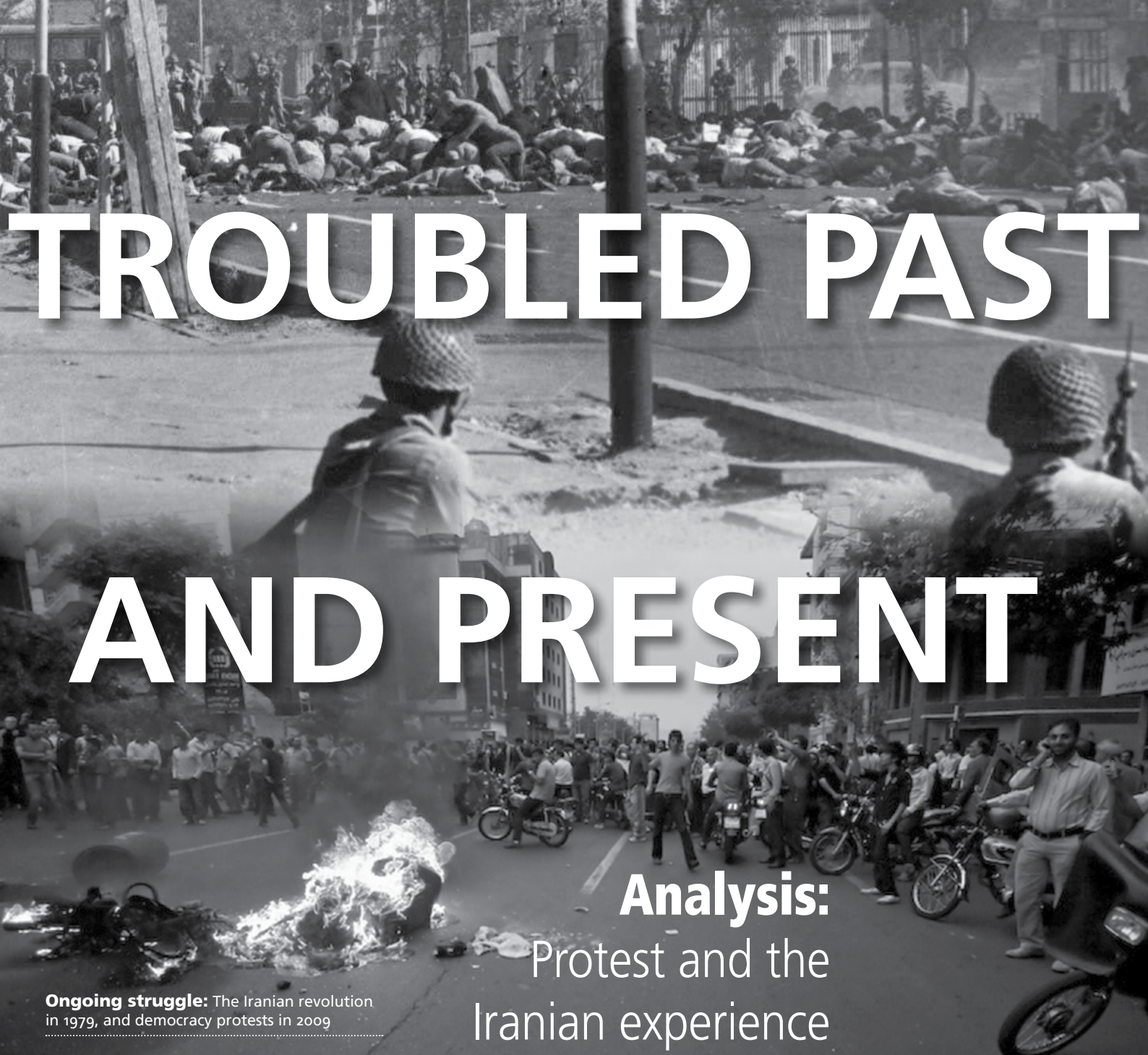
Interactions between teachers, students and parents

I'd imagine schools would be much more open with parents involved. They'd come in, maybe we'd build more, so instead of massive institutions with all these discipline problems we'd have smaller spaces with a real mix. And maybe we wouldn't have the rigid year system. Put a ten-year-old with an eight-year-old why not, with people dividing at their own levels rather than an insistency of doing this-this-and-this in order with the aim of ultimately churning people out at 16, or 18 as it is now, to work or not work.

Everyone in the community would have some sort of interest in the role of their local school. There'd be much more facilitators but there would need to be teaching going on as well, there's not a way you can get people to understand the Krebs cycle in biochemistry without teaching it, it's very hard to find out for yourself. Capitalist schooling has been very good at stuff like that – I mean I had a hard time understanding it at A-Level – but it's really useful knowledge.

How you do that without being a little bit didactic I'm not sure, but even so I think it'd be different, with less people who are





TROUBLED PAST AND PRESENT

Analysis: Protest and the Iranian experience

Ongoing struggle: The Iranian revolution in 1979, and democracy protests in 2009

Most news and discussions about Iran tend to focus on either the country's nuclear programme and economic sanctions, or the partnership of convenience that the threat of ISIS and the apparent need to contain it has created.

What attracts less attention is the ongoing struggle of Iranian workers against their autocratic state and imperialist machinations. In this article, I argue that the century-long revolutionary aspirations of Iranian workers form a backdrop and the necessary context for a proper understanding of the policies of both domestic autocracy and imperialism.

Constitutional revolution and its radicalisation

Modern Iranian revolutionary history began at the turn of the twentieth century with the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Two events acted as catalysts to it. First, the defeat of Russia in the 1905 Russo-Japanese war and the revolution that followed.

Iranian migrant workers, who had worked in Baku oil fields for several years prior to 1905, were intimately involved with the revolutionary currents and what they had learned in revolutionary ideas and modes of organisation they brought back with them and put into practice in Iran. Thus, during the revolutionary period of 1906-1911, *anjumans*, or councils, were the main form of grassroots and effective revolutionary and counter power organisations that were established in many towns and villages.

Second, the Tobacco Movement, an anti-authoritarian and anti-imperialist movement against a monopolistic and exploitative concession to a foreign power that led to its cancellation. The broad alliance of the clergy, merchants, peasantry, and the relatively small but influential urban middle class that led to its success remains a key characteristic of all subsequent revolutionary movements, and essential to their proper understanding.

After the initial success of the revolution, the new parliament, composed mainly of the representatives of wealthy landowners,

the bourgeoisie and senior clergy, ordered the councils to disband. Rather than disband, they extended their activities and agitated for radical political reforms, including the participation of women in the decision-making process. In the economic sphere, the councils imposed low prices on basic foodstuffs, prevented hoarding and expropriated the stock of merchants and landowners who refused to comply, and distributed necessary commodities in their respective towns and villages.

This radical mood soon extended to print workers in Tehran and in 1910, they formed Iran's first trade union, went on strike, and presented the government with a set of demands ranging from shorter working day to sick pay. In other words, while the new elite were keen to bring an end to the movement and opted for stability, others sought to transform it into a genuinely social revolution.



The radicalisation of the movement split the original class unity and large sections of the religious and commercial strata abandoned the revolutionary movement. Following a civil war, the radicals were defeated in 1911 and councils disbanded. The next radical phase had to wait for the Russian Revolution in 1917.

The Russian revolution provided the movement with the support of a major European country that hitherto had been an enemy.

For a few years after 1917, Iranian revolutionaries relied on the support of the Soviet government to resist both domestic dictatorship and British imperialism.

It also meant, however, that they were increasingly influenced by the Bolshevik ideology.

Thus, Leninism, whether as Stalinism or its later Maoist and Cuban variations, became the dominant ideology of the Iranian revolutionary left and, together with its more recent espousal of Trotskyism, remains so today.

By 1921, the Soviet Union had adopted a more pragmatic foreign policy and Iranian oil became increasingly important to Britain. Under such circumstances, neither power

restrictions of the previous two decades disappeared and freedom of the press, of political parties, and the right of workers to organise in trade unions, articulate their demands and exercise their rights as workers, were re-established.

By this time, however, the bulk of workers' organisations were under the influence of the Tudeh ("Masses") Party, a Stalinist party formed in 1941, representing and defending the interests and policies of the Soviet Union, which party leaders perceived as concomitant with the interests of the Iranian working class.

The party soon proved its loyalty to its masters in Moscow by agitating and pressing for an oil concession in northern Iran to the Soviet Union, on terms similar to what the British enjoyed in the south-west oil fields. The party was behind the curve, however. The overriding mood in Iran was for the nationalisation of oil, rather than granting an equally disadvantageous concession to another foreign power.

In the late 1940s, Attlee's supposedly socialist government offered a revised agreement, which hardly increased Iran's share of revenue and was rejected. His Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, in a

Dictatorship and revolution

With the fall of Mossadegh in 1953, the US emerged as the dominant imperialist power in Iran, the left parties and groups were virtually eliminated and, together with union organising and strikes, remained absent from the political scene for the following two decades. Nationalist and religious opponents were treated less harshly, however, and managed to resume their opposition within a few years. Nevertheless, effective political activity became increasingly restricted and centres of power concentrated in the person of the Shah and his allies.

In the quarter century that preceded the 1979 revolution, and under the rubric of modernisation theory and its prescribed policies, the dominant goal of the "free world" was to consolidate and strengthen the anti-Soviet forces in Iran. The modernisation policy that began in the early 1960s at the insistence of the US followed a period of economic growth and decline from the mid 1950s, which, in the last three years of the decade, had led to a sharp increase in the number of industrial strikes and their suppression by the regime. Consequently, both the Shah and JFK administration concluded that a far-reaching set of socio-economic reforms from above would head off the threats of revolutionary action and Soviet influence in Iran.

In 1963, the regime introduced six reform principles, of which land reform was the most effective in altering the prevailing social structure. Although presented as a measure to create a fairer society, the real aim of the reform was to widen the social base of support for the state among the peasantry, while at the same time reduce the traditional centres of power in the countryside.

Both the motivation and manner in which the Shah introduced the reforms united disparate classes in opposition. The senior clergy, whose interests were intertwined with large landowners, came into direct conflict with the state, while nationalists opposed the pervasive influence of the US in Iranian affairs. The regimes once again succeeded in defeating the protests, ban nationalist parties and exile many of the protest leaders, including Khomeini.

Thereafter, the regime and its American ally were free to pursue their policies unencumbered. The combination of foreign and domestic capital investment expenditures, trade liberalisation, increased oil revenues, and state-directed infrastructure projects, helped the economy grow at a rapid rate. The rate of growth increased still further in 1973, when the OPEC oil embargo caused a substantial increase in oil prices and revenues.

The sudden influx of petrodollars put a massive inflationary pressure on the economy, and property prices, rents, as well as the prices of both consumer and capital goods rose sharply. The increase in economic prosperity and money wages attracted an even higher number of unskilled migrant workers from the countryside to larger cities, particularly the capital, Tehran, where numerous shanty towns appeared in many areas surrounding the city.

This economic prosperity was short-lived, however, and by the mid-1970s, with much



Pomp: A scene from the Shah's coronation in 1926

was prepared to tolerate popular unrest, greater demand for democracy, or regional autonomy. Thus, similar to the strongman example of Atatürk in Turkey, Reza Khan, a commander in the Russian-led Cossack Brigade, became the prime minister and four years later declared himself Shah. It is important to note that Reza Shah's coming to power was due to the agreement with Britain, Russia and representatives of Iranian bourgeoisie, and lacked any popular support or legitimacy.

Occupation and the 1953 coup d'état

Following the Nazi invasion of Soviet Union, the oil fields in northern Iran acquired strategic importance, and the allied forces occupied Iran, despite its neutrality, in 1941. Reza Shah, whose sympathy for Nazi ideology had made him a liability, was forced to resign in favour of his son, the last Shah.

For the rest of the decade, the democratic pulse beat strongly, political and other

typically Orientalist fashion, branded Iranians as "irrational" and imposed a crippling oil embargo on Iran.

The ensuing wave of popular protests brought Dr Mossadegh to power as prime minister in April 1951. In the same month, Churchill replaced Attlee and extended the oil embargo to a naval blockade of Iranian ports. Caught between Britain and the Soviet Union, Mossadegh decided to rely on Truman, who had made favourable statements on Iranian oil nationalisation, and to seek desperately needed US financial assistance.

Truman's words, however, never became deeds, and with the Cold War in full swing and the election of Eisenhower, the US, Britain and their Iranian collaborators planned and executed a successful coup. The Soviet Union, having decided to wait for a better future opportunity, instructed the Tudeh party and its hundreds of thousands of supporters not to intervene, thus ensuring the success of the coup.

of the world in recession, the demand for Iranian oil fell sharply and major private and public economic projects halted, but prices continued to rise. To control "stagflation", the regime introduced severe economic measures to control price rises and wage demands, leading to disaffection and protests. The waves of protests, which began in 1977, eventually led to the fall of the regime. Lack of space precludes a detailed discussion of the revolution, except to point out that, yet again, its success was as a result of a wide and varied coalition of forces, with Industrial workers joining the protests later than other groups. Nevertheless, workers formed strike committees in factories and workplaces and it was their general strike that dealt the decisive blow to the regime and spelt its demise in February 1979.

Consolidation, reformism and neoliberalism

Almost immediately after the success of the revolution, the grand alliance of social forces began to disintegrate. Workers formed factory committees and articulated their own specific demands, while various left groups, whose armed attacks on the military was a key factor in the final days of the revolution, sought a role in the post-revolutionary government. However, the clergy, who considered themselves as leaders of the revolution and Islam as its ideological force, sought to consolidate their power and rid themselves of individuals and groups they considered inimical to a theocracy.

Consequently, in a period of eighteen months, i.e. between the success of the revolution and the Iraqi invasion of Iran, pre-revolutionary alliances melted away. Against the concerted efforts of the clergy, the left and secular forces offered little more than confused and often subservient strategies.

An early manifestation of this confusion and subservience was when the new regime imposed restriction of women's rights. Most left groups did not support, and even criticised as divisive, the massive women's protests that followed. Another was their support for kangaroo courts that were set up immediately after the revolution to dispense "revolutionary justice".

The same tribunals soon became the means by which the theocratic state eliminated, and continues to eliminate, its opponents. Yet another was their failure to organise workers and thwart the replacement of factory strike committees, which had the potential to become the nucleus of independent workers' organisations and self-management, with Islamic committees. Supported by the centralising and confident power of the new state, Islamic committees eventually replaced the revolutionary workers committees, and became de facto agents of the regime in factories and workplaces.

The Iraqi invasion of Iran in September 1980 presented the regime with its greatest opportunity to consolidate its power and resolve several potentially existential problems concurrently. First, it neutralised the threat from its "liberal" wing, a process that had begun in the wake of the American embassy takeover some months earlier. Next, the government set out to extend its power by outlawing independent trade unions, political parties, including the pro-



Regime toppled: A mass rally in 1979

Picture: XcepticZP/CC

Soviet Tudeh party, as well as introducing a "cultural revolution", which extended to universities and schools. Finally, as an act of monumental barbarity, the regime summarily executed an estimated five thousand to thirty thousand left activists in the summer of 1988. Thus, when the war ended, very little of the original alliance had remained, and the theocratic regime was firmly in control.

In transitioning to a peacetime economy since 1988, the trend has been to privatise the companies and industries that had been nationalised after the revolution and impose strict control on wages. Workers' attempts to form independent trade unions, and their collective demands for better conditions, however modest, have been brutally suppressed by the regime, while elevating economic and political corruption to the status of state philosophy.

Despite several futile attempts to reform the system from above and within the strict boundaries of the Islamic Republic, in practice, they have merely expanded the market for imported consumer goods for some sections of the society at the expense of domestic industries and their workers. For workers, the economic situation has increasingly worsened and political rights restricted. With wages set by the government at well below its own stated poverty level, complete lack

of job security, and the impossibility of collective bargaining under the constant gaze of Islamic committees, the working day passes. Isolated industrial strikes, of which there are several on any given day, are suppressed and workers sacked. It is impossible to reform the Islamic Republic and the brutal and oppressive principles on which its entire edifice is based.

Conclusion

The history of modern Iran is replete with tales of exploitation, dictatorship and resistance, with the modes and nature of each changing constantly and in accordance with circumstances. What has remained constant, however, is the workers' profound and unshakable belief in their own power and the numerous attempts by states, foreign and domestic, to suppress or harness this power for their own purposes.

In the thirty-five years since the revolution, Iranian workers, caught as they are between a brutal theocratic regime and the constant threat of a devastating imperialist war, have been engaged in their severest struggle yet, the outcome of which, whenever it comes, will resonate far beyond the country's national borders.

**By Hamid
Eshani**



HISTORY

September 2014 marked the 150th anniversary of the founding of the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA, commonly referred to as the First International). While much is often made of the dispute between Marx and Bakunin within the International, resulting in Bakunin's expulsion in 1872, more important from an anarchist perspective is how anarchism as a distinct revolutionary movement emerged from the debates and conflicts within the International, not as the result of a personal conflict between Marx and Bakunin, but because of conflicting ideas regarding working class liberation.

Many members of the International, particularly in Italy, Spain and French speaking Switzerland, but also in Belgium and France, took to heart the statement in the International's Preamble that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves. They envisioned the International as a fighting organisation for the daily struggle of the workers against the capitalists for better working conditions, but also looked to the International as a federation of workers across national borders that would provide the impetus for revolutionary change and the creation of a post-revolutionary socialist society based on workers' self-management and voluntary federation. It was from out of these elements in the International that the first European anarchist movements arose.

When the International was founded in September 1864 by French and British trade unionists, any anarchist tendencies were then very weak. The French delegates at the founding of the First International regarded themselves as "mutualists," moderate followers of Proudhon, not anarchist revolutionaries. They supported free credit, workers' control, small property holdings and equivalent exchange of products by the producers themselves. They wanted the International to become a mutualist organisation that would pool the financial resources of European workers to provide free credit for the creation of a system of producer and consumer cooperatives that would ultimately displace the capitalist economic system.

The first full congress of the International was not held until September 1866, in Geneva, Switzerland, with delegates from England, France, Germany and Switzerland. Although the French delegates did not call for the immediate abolition of the state, partly because such radical talk would only result in the International being banned in France, then under the dictatorship of Napoleon III, they did express their rejection of the state as a "superior authority" that would think, direct and act in the name of all, stifling initiative. They shared Proudhon's view that social, economic and political relations should be based on contracts providing reciprocal benefits, thereby preserving the independence and equality of the contracting parties. The French delegates distinguished this "mutualist federalism" from a communist government that would rule over society, regulating all social and economic functions.

The First



Creeds at war: (L-R) Bakunin speaks at the Basel Congress, the IWMA symbol, and Karl Marx

At the next Congress of the International in Lausanne, Switzerland, in September 1867, César De Paepe, one of the most influential Belgian delegates, debated the more conservative French mutualists on the collectivisation of land, which he supported, arguing that if large industrial and commercial enterprises, such as railways, canals, mines and public services, should be considered collective property to be managed by companies of workers, as the mutualists agreed, then so should the land. The peasant and farmer, as much as the worker, should be entitled to the fruits of their labour, without part of that product being appropriated by either the capitalists or the landowners. De Paepe argued that this "collectivism" was consistent with Proudhon's "mutualist program," which demanded "that the whole product of labour shall belong to the producer." However, it

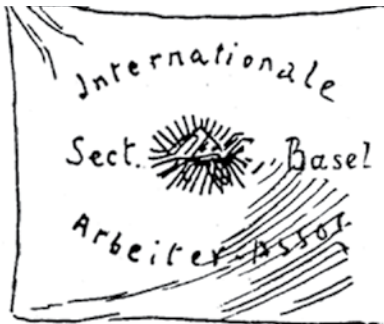
was not until the next congress in Brussels in September 1868 that a majority of delegates adopted a collectivist position which included land as well as industry.

At the Brussels Congress, De Paepe also argued that the workers' "societies of resistance" and trade unions, through which they organised and coordinated their strike and other activities, constituted the "embryo" of those "great companies of workers" that would replace the "companies of the capitalists" by eventually taking control of collective enterprises. For, according to De Paepe, the purpose of trade unions and strike activity was not merely to improve existing working conditions but to abolish wage labour. This could not be accomplished in one country alone, but required a federation of workers in all countries, who would replace the capitalist system with the "universal organisation of work and exchange."

We need more long thinking on the heavy reading that so rarely gets a full hearing

International

Looking back at the IWMA, 150 years after its founding in London

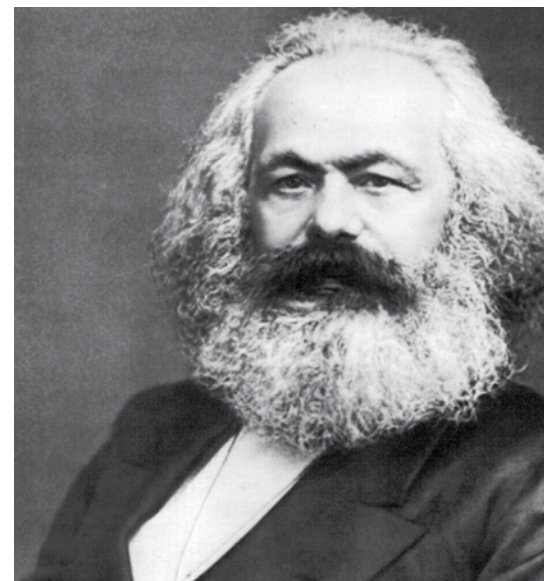


of work and all other capital" into "the collective property of the whole of society," to be "utilised only by the workers," through their own "agricultural and industrial associations."

In Bakunin's contemporaneous program for an "International Brotherhood" of revolutionaries, he denounced the Blanquists and other like-minded revolutionaries who dreamt of "a powerfully centralised revolutionary State," for such "would inevitably result in military dictatorship and a new master," condemning the masses "to slavery and exploitation by a new pseudo-revolutionary aristocracy." In contrast, Bakunin and his associates did "not fear anarchy, we invoke it." Bakunin envisaged the "popular revolution" being organised "from the bottom up, from the circumference to the centre, in accordance with the principle of liberty, and not from the top down or from the centre to the circumference in the manner of all authority."

In the lead up to the Basle Congress of the International in September 1869, Bakunin put forward the notion of the general strike as a means of revolutionary social transformation, observing that when "strikes spread out from one place to another, they come very close to turning into a general strike," which could "result only in a great cataclysm which forces society to shed its old skin." He also supported, as did the French Internationalists, the creation of "as many cooperatives for consumption, mutual credit, and production as we can, everywhere, for though they may be unable to emancipate us in earnest under present economic conditions, they prepare the precious seeds for the organisation of the future, and through them the workers become accustomed to handling their own affairs."

Bakunin argued that the program of the International must "inevitably result in the abolition of classes (and hence of the bourgeoisie, which is the dominant class today), the abolition of all territorial States and political fatherlands, and the foundation, upon their ruins, of the great international federation of all national and local productive groups." Bakunin was giving a more explicitly anarchist slant to the idea, first broached by De Paepe at the



Brussels Congress, and then endorsed at the Basle Congress in September 1869, that it was through the International, conceived as a federation of trade unions and workers' cooperatives, that capitalism would be abolished and replaced by a free federation of productive associations.

Jean-Louis Pindy, a delegate from the carpenters' *Chambre syndicale* in Paris, expressed the views of many of the Internationalists at the Basle Congress when he argued that the means adopted by the trade unions must be shaped by the ends which they hoped to achieve. He saw the goal of the International as being the replacement of capitalism and the state with "councils of the trades bodies, and by a committee of their respective delegates, overseeing the labour relations which are to take the place of politics," so that "wage slavery may be replaced by the free federation of free producers." The Belgian Internationalists, such as De Paepe and Eugène Hins, put forward much the same position, with Hins looking to the International to create "the organisation of free exchange, operating through a vast section of labour from one end of the world to another," that would replace "the old political systems" with industrial

Here we have the first public expression within the International of the basic tenets of revolutionary and anarchist syndicalism: that through their own trade union organisations, by which the workers waged their daily struggles against the capitalists, the workers were creating the very organisations through which they would bring about the social revolution and reconstitute society, replacing capitalist exploitation with workers' self-management.

After the Brussels Congress, Bakunin and his associates applied for their group, the Alliance of Socialist Democracy, to be admitted into the International. The Alliance stood for "atheism, the abolition of cults and the replacement of faith by science, and divine by human justice." The Alliance supported the collectivist position adopted at the Brussels Congress, seeking to transform "the land, the instruments



organisation, an idea which can be traced back to Proudhon, but which was now being given a more revolutionary emphasis.

The Basle Congress therefore declared that "all workers should strive to establish associations for resistance in their various trades," forming an international alliance so that "the present wage system may be replaced by the federation of free producers." This was the highwater mark of the federalist, anti-authoritarian currents in the First International, and it was achieved at its most representative congress, with delegates from England, France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Spain.

Bakunin attended the Congress, drawing out the anarchist implications of this position. He argued that because the State provided "the sanction and guarantee of the means by which a small number of men appropriate to themselves the product of the work of all the others," the political, juridical, national and territorial State must be abolished. Bakunin emphasized the role of the state in creating and perpetuating class privilege and exploitation, arguing that "if some individuals in present-day society do acquire... great sums, it is not by their labour that they do so but by their privilege, that is, by a juridically legalised injustice."

Bakunin expressed his antipathy, shared by other members of the International, to revolution from above through a coercive state apparatus. With respect to peasant small holders, he argued that "if we tried to expropriate these millions of small farmers by decree after proclaiming the social liquidation, we would inevitably cast them into reaction, and we would have to use force against them to submit to the revolution." Better to "carry out the social liquidation at the same time that you proclaim the political and juridical liquidation of the State," such that the peasants will be left only with "possession de facto" of their land. Once "deprived of all legal sanction," no longer being "shielded under the State's powerful protection," these small holdings "will be transformed easily under the pressure of revolutionary events and forces" into collective property.

The Basle Congress was the last truly representative congress of the International. The Franco-Prussian War in 1870 and the Paris Commune in 1871 made it difficult to hold a congress, while the Hague Congress of 1872 was stacked by Marx and Engels with delegates with dubious credentials. One must therefore look at the activities of the various International sections themselves between 1869 and 1872 to see how the anti-authoritarian, revolutionary collectivist currents in the International eventually coalesced into a European anarchist movement.

In France, Eugène Varlin, one of the International's outstanding militants, described the position adopted "almost unanimously" by the delegates at the Basle Congress as "collectivism, or non-authoritarian communism." Varlin expressed the views of many of the French Internationalists when he wrote that the workers' own organisations, the trade unions and societies of resistance and solidarity, "form the natural elements of the social structure of the future." By

March 1870, he was writing that short "of placing everything in the hands of a highly centralized, authoritarian state which would set up a hierarchic structure from top to bottom of the labour process... we must admit that the only alternative is for the workers themselves to have the free disposition and possession of the tools of production ... through cooperative associations in various forms."

The revolutionary syndicalist ideas of the Belgians and Bakunin's more explicitly anarchist views were also being spread in Spain. Echoing De Paepe's comments from the Brussels Congress, the Spanish Internationalists described the International as containing "within itself the seeds of social regeneration... it holds the embryo of all future institutions." They founded the Federación Regional Española (FRE - Spanish Regional Federation) in June 1870, which took an anarchist position. One of its militants, Rafael Farga Pellicer, declared that: "We want



the end to the domination of capital, the state, and the church. Upon their ruins we will construct anarchy, and the free federation of free associations of workers." In addition, the FRE adopted a form of organisation based on anarchist principles.i

In French speaking Switzerland, as a result of a split between the reformist minority, supported by Marx, and the anti-authoritarian collectivist majority, allied with Bakunin, the Jura Federation was created in 1870. The Jura Federation adopted an anarchist stance, declaring that "all participation of the working class in the politics of bourgeois governments can result only in the consolidation and perpetuation of the existing order."

On the eve of the Franco-Prussian War during the summer of 1870, the French Internationalists took an anti-war stance, arguing that the war could

only be a "fratricidal war" that would divide the working class, leading to "the complete triumph of despotism." The Belgian Internationalists issued similar declarations, denouncing the war as a war of "the despots against the people," and calling on them to respond with a "war of the people against the despots."

This was a theme that Bakunin was soon to expand upon in his Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis, published in September 1870. Although many of the French Internationalists abandoned their anti-war stance, Bakunin argued that revolutionaries should seek to transform the war into a country wide insurrection that would then spread the social revolution across Europe. With the French state in virtual collapse, it was time for the "people armed" to seize the means of production and overthrow their oppressors, whether the French bourgeoisie or the German invaders.

For the social revolution to succeed, Bakunin argued that it was essential that the peasants and workers band together, despite the mutual distrust between them. The peasants should be encouraged to "take the land and throw out those landlords who live by the labour of others," and "to destroy, by direct action, every political, juridical, civil, and military institution," establishing "anarchy through the whole countryside." A social revolution in France, rejecting "all official organisation" and "government centralisation," would lead to "the social emancipation of the proletariat" throughout Europe.

Shortly after completing his Letters, Bakunin tried to put his ideas into practice, travelling to Lyon, where he met up with some other Internationalists and revolutionaries. Bakunin and his associates issued a proclamation announcing the abolition of the "administrative and governmental machine of the State," the replacement of the judicial apparatus by "the justice of the people," the suspension of taxes and mortgages, with "the federated communes" to be funded by a levy on "the rich classes," and ending with a call to arms. Bakunin and his confederates briefly took over City Hall, but eventually the National Guard recaptured it and Bakunin was arrested. He was freed by a small group of his associates and then made his way to Marseilles, eventually returning to Switzerland. A week after Bakunin left Marseilles, there was an attempt to establish a revolutionary commune there and, at the end of October, in Paris.ii

■ Robert Graham is the editor of *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*, a three volume anthology of anarchist writings from ancient China to the present day. He is currently working on a history of the emergence of European anarchist movements from out of the First International.

■ Part Two of this article will appear in the next issue of *Black Flag*.

By Robert
Graham



Bakunin at 200

This year marks the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Bakunin, on May 30th 1814, and Bakunin is a figure we should not forget.

He is not just some historical curiosity or relic of interest only to academic historians, for his life and writings continue to be a source of inspiration and ideas – at least to libertarian socialists who have not become completely besotted with French post-structuralist theory.

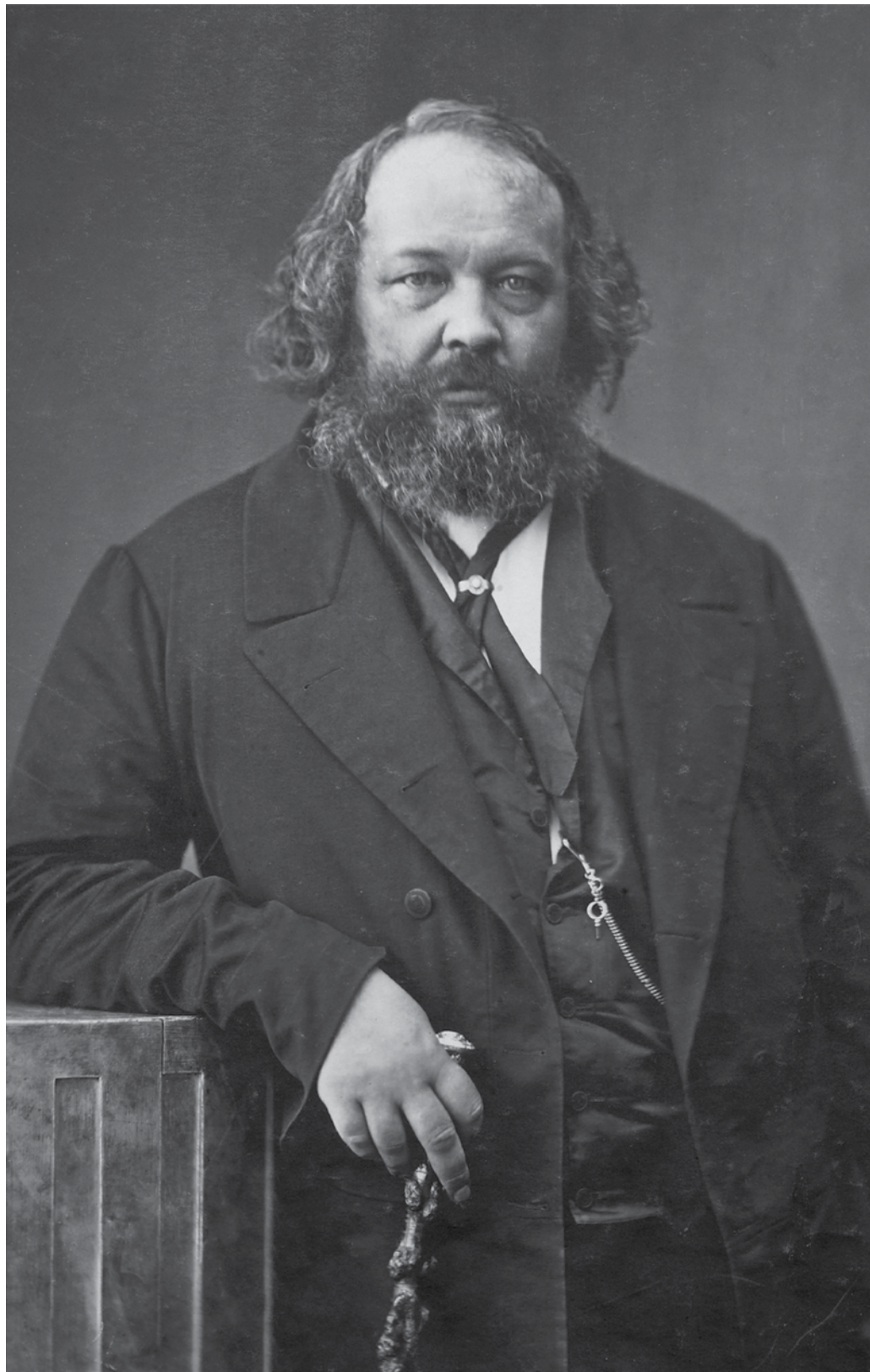
What prompted me, indeed provoked me, to write my own book defending Bakunin's legacy (*Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1993) was that throughout the 1980s the Russian anarchist had been subjected to an absolute welter of abusive and dismissive critiques.

Liberal scholars, like Isaiah Berlin and Aileen Kelly for example, found Bakunin absolutely fascinating, but only as a subject for studies in utopian or Freudian psychology, and they falsely depicted him as completely lost in Hegelian philosophical mysticism. They described Bakunin as fanatical, vindictive, gullible, something of a megalomaniac, a romantic dilettante who lived in a fantasy world and was completely detached from the real world of politics. They concluded, rather absurdly, that Bakunin was a precursor of fascism. This critique said a lot about the political naivety and shallowness of liberal scholarship.

Marxists, on the other hand, typified by US academic Hal Draper and former leading Socialist Workers Party member Pat Stack, repeated parrot-fashion the crass opinions of their guru Karl Marx, dismissed Bakunin as an "ignoramus", a "petty-bourgeois" ideologist, and a complete "buffoon" who was bent only on insurrectionary violence, brigandage, mindless destruction and personal dictatorship. How little they understood Bakunin's anarchism.

But what also troubled me, during the same decade, was that even anarchists were beginning to express derogatory and dismissive attitudes towards Bakunin. With the advent of sociobiology, "anarcho-capitalism", primitivism, postmodernism and a revival of religious metaphysics (mysticism) some anarchists were suggesting, even in the pages of anarchist newspaper *Freedom*, that Bakunin's political and philosophical ideas has become redundant and outdated – or just plain obsolete.

Since then however, with a resurgence of interest in anarchism by academic



Uncompromising: Mikhail Bakunin

scholars, Bakunin's legacy has come to be acknowledged. Paul McLaughlin's *Mikhail Bakunin: The Philosophical Basis of His Theory of Anarchy*, (Algora Publishing, 2002) was an illuminating study of the philosophical basis of Bakunin's anarchism. It, along with Mark Leier's superb biography *Bakunin: The Creative Passion – A Biography*, (Thomas Dunne Books, 2006) has reaffirmed Bakunin's importance as a pioneering political theorist and social anarchist.

Michael Bakunin was an extraordinary man, with a flamboyant personality. Physically a giant, he was full of energy.

His eccentricity, exuberance and personal charm seems to have captivated almost everyone with whom he came into contact, Marx included. He has no sense of order, no sense of property and virtually no sense of material comfort. He invariably slept with his clothes on. The famous composer Richard Wagner, who knew Bakunin in his youth when they were both involved in the Dresden revolt of May 1849 and shared



barricades against the Prussian troops, suggested that everything about Bakunin was “colossal”.

What is historically important about Bakunin however was not so much his flamboyant personality, but rather the fact that Bakunin was a seminal political thinker and deserves to be recognised as such.

Given the fact that he was always deeply involved in political struggles and led the life of a “Bohemian vagrant” – as he has been described – Bakunin never produced any systematic account of his own political philosophy. Nevertheless his core political ideas, particularly the theory of libertarian socialism that he developed in the last decade of his life, became the legacy of Saint-Imier.

The Swiss town, where the non-Marxist sections of the First International gathered in September 1872 in the aftermath of the Paris Commune, hosted a conference which would become the iconic founding moment of the (social) anarchist movement. Bakunin died only four years after it hosted that historic event, aged 62, and was buried in Bremgarten cemetery in Berne, Switzerland.

Bakunin’s legacy, which came to be associated with such figures as Élisée Reclus, Louis Michel, Peter Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta, entailed a form of anarchism that may be described as a synthesis between radical liberalism, with its emphasis on the liberty of the individual, and socialism (or communism), which implied a repudiation of capitalism and the affirmation of equality, communal ownership and voluntary organisation. This synthesis is well-expressed in Bakunin’s famous adage:

“That liberty without socialism is privilege and injustice, and that socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality.”

Bakunin, like Marx, embraced the radical aspects of the French Enlightenment, stressing the importance of critical reason and empirical science, and rejecting all knowledge claims based on traditional authority, mystical intuition and divine revelation. The Russian anarchist was always opposed to religion, noting that it was intrinsically linked with state power.

While advocating a materialist philosophy, Bakunin always rejected scientism – the domination of human life by science. Bakunin also affirmed Enlightenment values of liberty, equality and fraternity (social solidarity), the rallying cry of the French Revolution, and sought to make these values into a social reality.

Thus the revolutionary socialism (social anarchism) that Bakunin was the first to formulate as a coherent philosophy and which was later developed and proclaimed by the social revolutionaries of the First International can be defined in terms of four essential tenets or principles:

Firstly, a rejection of state power and all forms of hierarchy and oppression; a critique of all forms of power and authority that inhibit the liberty of the individual.

The human individual was, for Bakunin, essentially a social being, not some disembodied ego or some abstract possessive individual, still less a fixed, benign essence. Freedom was determined by the type of social relationships an individual experienced, not isolation. It also meant the Marxist “workers’ state” was doomed to failure and could only produce a new form of class society, not socialism.

Secondly, a complete repudiation of the capitalist market economy, along with its wage system, private property, its competitive ethos and the ideology of possessive individualism. For Bakunin and the early social anarchists, work under capitalism was a form of “wage slavery” where the worker sold their labour – and so liberty – to a boss and was, as a result, exploited by them.

Thirdly, that the emancipation of the oppressed was the task of the oppressed themselves by means of their own social and economic organisation and struggle. Rejecting electioneering (“political action”) as a flawed strategy which would de-radicalise the parties using it, Bakunin argued that working people (wage-workers, peasants and artisans) had to form unions and use strikes – including the general strike – to improve their conditions under capitalism and to prepare for social revolution.

Fourthly, and finally, Bakunin expressed a vision of society based solely on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation, a form of self-managed social organisation that would provide the fullest expression of human liberty. Bakunin was against extreme individualism, feeling that a person could only become a human being within a society and could only be truly free in a free and humane society – anarchy – for a person dying of starvation or crushed by poverty cannot, in any meaningful sense, be free.

With corporate capitalism still reigning triumphant, creating conditions of political turmoil, social dislocation, ecological degradation and gross economic inequalities, and the best-known alternatives of Marxism and social democracy proving as bankrupt as Bakunin predicted, we surely need to take seriously his legacy of revolutionary anarchism.

By Brian
Morris

Radical Reprint: Ideas written to a member of the Social Democratic Alliance in Lyons

This letter clearly presents a syndicalist vision of social revolution based on workers councils as well as the need for anarchists to organise as anarchists to influence the class struggle (while the term is unfortunate, Bakunin’s “invisible dictatorship” is clearly not a dictatorship in the usual sense of the word: see section J.3.7 of volume 2 of An Anarchist FAQ).

March 12, 1870, Geneva

Dear friend and brother,
Circumstances beyond my control prevent me from coming to take part in your great Assembly of March 13. But I would not want to let it pass without expressing my thoughts and wishes to my brothers in France.

If I could attend that impressive gathering, here is what I would say to the French workers, with all the barbaric frankness that characterises the Russian socialist democrats.

Workers, no longer count on anyone but yourselves.

Do not demoralise and paralyse your rising power in foolish alliances with bourgeois radicalism.

The bourgeoisie no longer has anything to give you.

Politically and morally, it is dead, and of all its historical magnificence, it has only preserved a single power, that of a wealth founded on the exploitation of your labour.

Formerly, it was great, it was bold, it was powerful in thought and will.

It had a world to overturn and a new world to create, the world of modern civilisation.

It overturned the feudal world with the strength of your arms, and it has built its new world on your shoulders. It naturally hopes that you will never cease to serve as caryatids for that world.

It wants its preservation, and you want, you must want its overthrow and destruction. What does it have in common with you?

Will you push naïveté to the point of believing that the bourgeoisie would ever consent to willingly strip itself of that which constitutes its prosperity, its liberty and its very existence, as a class economically separated from the economically enslaved mass of the proletariat?



A letter to Albert Richard, from Mikhail Bakunin

Doubtless not. You know that no dominant class has ever done justice against itself, that it has always been necessary to help it.

Wasn't that famous night of August 4 [1789 – the abolition of feudalism in France], for which we have granted too much honour to the French nobility, the inevitable consequence of the general uprising of the peasants who burned the parchments of the nobility, and with those parchments the castles?

You know very well that rather than concede to you the conditions of a serious economic equality, the only conditions you could accept, they will push themselves back a thousand times under the protection of a parliamentary lie, and if necessary under that of a new military dictatorship.

So then what could you expect from bourgeois republicanism? What would you gain by allying yourself with it? Nothing – and you would lose everything, for you could not ally yourself with it without abandoning the holy cause, the only great cause today: that of the complete emancipation of the proletariat.

It is time for you to proclaim a complete rupture. Your salvation is only at this price.

Does this mean that you should reject all individuals born and raised in the bourgeois class, but who, convinced of the justice of your cause, come to you to serve and to help you triumph? Not at all. Receive them as friends, as equals, as brothers, provided that their will is sincere and that they have given you both theoretical and practical guarantees of the sincerity of their convictions.

In theory, they should proclaim loudly and without any hesitation all the principles, conditions and consequences of a serious social and economic equality for all individuals. In practice, they must have firmly and permanently severed their relationship of interest, feeling and vanity with the bourgeois world, which is condemned to die.

You bear within you today all the elements of the power that must renew the world. But the elements of the power are still not the power.

To constitute a real force, they must be organised; and in order for that organisation to be consistent in its basis and purpose, it must receive within it no foreign elements. So you must hold back everything that belongs to civilisation, to the legal, political and social organisation of the bourgeoisie.

Even when bourgeois politics is red as blood and burning like hot iron, if it does not accept as its direct and immediate aim the destruction of legal property and the political State – the two forts on which all bourgeois domination rests – its triumph could only be fatal to the cause of the proletariat.

Moreover, the bourgeoisie, which has



Stirring revolt: The rise of the Paris Commune was just days away as Bakunin wrote

come to the last degree of intellectual and moral impotence, is today incapable of making a revolution by itself.

The people alone want it, and have the power to do it. So what is desired by this advance party of the bourgeoisie, represented by the liberals or exclusively political democrats? It wants to seize the direction of the popular movement to once again turn it to his advantage – or as they say themselves, to save the bases of what they call civilisation, the very foundations of bourgeois domination.

Do the workers want to play the roles of dupes one more time? No. But in order not to be dupes what should they do? Abstain from all participation in bourgeois radicalism and organise outside of it the forces of the proletariat. The basis of that organisation is entirely given: It is the workshops and the federation of the workshops; the creation of funds for resistance, instruments of struggle against the bourgeoisie, and their federation not just nationally, but internationally. The creation of trades councils [chambres de travail] as in Belgium.

And when the hour of the revolution sounds, the liquidation of the State and of bourgeois society, including all legal relations. Anarchy, that is to say the true, the

open popular revolution: legal and political anarchy, and economic organisation, from top to bottom and from the circumference to the centre, of the triumphant world of the workers.

And in order to save the revolution, to lead it to a good end, even in the midst of that anarchy, the action of a collective, invisible dictatorship, not invested with any power, but [with something] that much more effective and powerful – the natural action of all the energetic and sincere socialist revolutionaries, spread over the surface of the country, of all the countries, but powerfully united by a common thought and will.

That, my dear friend, is, in my opinion, the only program which by its bold application will lead not to new deceptions, but to the final triumph of the proletariat.

The translation is by Shawn Wilbur and is part of his project to produce Bakunin's complete works in English (blog, bakuninlibrary.org).

By Mikhail
Bakunin



REVIEWS

THE REALIST

The Method of Freedom: An Errico Malatesta Reader

£18.00

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by Errico Malatesta, edited by Davide Turcato

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330 pp

Errico Malatesta (1853-1932) was one of anarchism's greatest activists and thinkers for over 60 years. He joined the First International in 1871 and became an anarchist after meeting Mikhail Bakunin in 1872.

He spent most of his life exiled from Italy, helping to build unions in Argentina in the late 1880s and taking an active part during the two Red Years after the war when Italy was on the verge of revolution (the authorities saw the threat and imprisoned him and other leading anarchists before a jury dismissed all charges).

Playing a key role in numerous debates within the movement – on using elections, participation in the labour movement, the nature of social revolution, syndicalism and platformism (to name just a few), he saw the rise and failure of the Second International, then the Third before spending the last years of his life under house arrest in Mussolini's Italy.

The length of Malatesta's activism within the movement is matched by the quality of his thought and this is why all anarchists will benefit from reading him. Before *The Method of Freedom*, we had his classic pamphlet *Anarchy*, Vernon Richard's *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (a selection of snippets grouped by theme) and *The Anarchist Revolution* (articles from the 1920s) as well as a few articles translated here and there.

Anyone reading these works would have quickly realised how important and useful Malatesta's ideas were. Deeply realistic, with a firm grasp on the here and now as well as principles, he avoided the extremism that often befalls anarchists (violent propaganda or pacifism; disdaining the labour movement or being submerged in it; simplistic/romantic notions of revolution or reformism). He did not take his wishes for reality but instead looked to the situation as it was and applied his principles to make anarchism relevant and practical.

The breadth of material this work makes available is impressive and gives for the first time a clear picture of Malatesta's ideas. Organised in chronological order, it shows us how his ideas developed and changed while, at the same time, keeping the core principles which were there from the start. His practical nature comes to the fore, the



notion that anarchism is a realistic theory that not only was able to be applied now but also had to be because of its libertarian nature:

"Our duty [was], which was the logical outcome of our ideas, the condition which our conception of revolution and re-organisation of society imposes on us, namely, to live among the people and to win them over to our ideas by actively taking part in their struggles and sufferings" (179)

This did not mean ignoring the anarchist movement. Far from it for he entered into numerous debates on a host of subjects – all as relevant to anarchism today as is what he had to say.

His discussion of organisation predates by decades the issues raised by Jo Freeman in *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*, namely that "non-organisation culminates in an authority which, being unmonitored and unaccountable, is no less of a real authority for all that" and so "foundering in dis-organisation" it naturally happens that the few "impose their thinking and their will" onto the "bulk of the party". (103) As to what seems the perennial democracy debate, he presents simple common sense by correctly suggesting that minorities "defer voluntarily whenever necessary and the feeling of solidarity require it".

To those who asked "what if the

We need more long thinking on the heavy reading that so rarely gets a full hearing

DREAMER

Fact File: Errico Malatesta

- Aged 14 he faced his first arrest for writing a letter to the king demanding an end to local injustices.
- Radicalised at university, he was expelled aged 18 for demonstrating and joined the International Workingmen's Association that same year.
- Aged 19, he met leading anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, in whose group he would go on to play a major role.
- For the next four years he was propagandised for insurrection, was jailed twice and attempted to free the province of Benetento before being arrested.
- Held for 16 months and acquitted, he was harassed into exile by the police.
- Travelling, he wound up in Switzerland, befriending Elisee Reclus and Peter Kropotkin.
- In 1880 he moved to London where he helped organise the short-lived anarchist St Imier International.
- Two years later he would fight the British colonials in Egypt, and nursed cholera victims in Naples before fleeing to South America.
- He returned to Nice and London in 1889, spending eight years striking out from Britain to agitate across Europe.
- In 1912 he was jailed for eight months in London and deported to Italy after the First World War ended.
- In 1921, aged 68 he was jailed again by the Italian government, and released just in time to see the fascists gain power.
- He continued to write and agitate until his death in 1932 from pneumonia.

minority refuses to give away?" Malatesta responded: "What if the majority makes to abuse its strength?" (214) For those who argue anarchism is democracy and also include minority rights, rather than refute Malatesta's position they accept it – but use different words. Perhaps we can sum it up as anarchists support majority decision-making but not majority rule and move onto more fruitful things? Like applying our ideas in the class struggle?

Here Malatesta makes such obvious points that it is slightly embarrassing that he felt the need to actually put pen to paper to advocate them. He lamented that by "simply preaching abstract theories" in

Reader: Errico Malatesta mixed a hard head with grand ideals

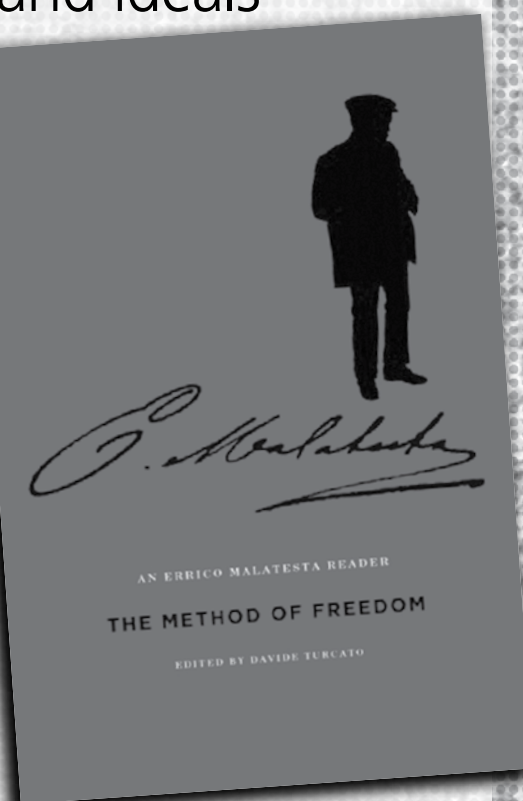
the 1880s "we have become isolated" (178) and argued that anarchism could become relevant "only in workingmen's associations, strikes, collective revolt". (179) In this he simply reminded anarchists of the ideas of the libertarian wing of the First International, when he joined the movement, which he summarised in 1884 as being "[s]trikes, resistance societies, labor organisations" and "encouraging workers to band together and resist the bosses" as the means of "struggling against all the economic, political, religious, judicial, and pseudo-scientifically moral institutions of bourgeois society". (58)

The Method of Freedom, then, adds to the growing pile of books that refute the notion, popular with some academics and Marxists, that anarchists in France turned to syndicalism only after the failure of "propaganda by the deed" in the mid-1890s (syndicalism then spreading to the rest of the world and displacing communist-anarchism). Malatesta, like Kropotkin, advocated anarchist involvement in the labour movement from the start: although it is true he stressed this far more after his union organising in South America and the example of the 1889 London Dock Strike. This was part and parcel of the role of anarchists to encourage the spirit of resistance:

"The better the people's material and moral conditions are and the more it has become aware of its own strength and injured to and skilled in struggle, through resistance and relentless struggles for improved conditions, the better equipped the people is for revolution." (257)

Looking at neoliberal Britain, with its staggeringly low levels of collective struggle in the face of the unremitting Con-Dem onslaught against working class people, his comments that the individualism of capitalism results in "a constant tendency in the direction of growing tyranny by the few and slavishness for the many" and only the "resistance from the people is the only boundary set upon the bullying of the bosses and rules" seem all too sadly relevant. As is his conclusion: "there is no resistance because the spirit of cooperation, of association is missing". (229)

This applied within the movement itself, with Malatesta pointing out that with nothing practical to do, many "unable



to bear such idleness" turn to electoral politics "just for something to do" and "then, bit by bit, abandon the revolutionary route altogether". (70) People "who might have all of the making of an anarchist ... prefer – making the best of a bad situation – to sign on with the social democrats and other politickers". (103) How true: today we see some turning to Bookchin's flawed "Libertarian Municipalism" as if the germs of reformism did not exist in the local state as much as in Parliament.

Anarchists, then, had to use tactics which "will bring us into direct and unbroken contact with the masses" as the masses "are led to big demands by way of small requests and small revolts". (76-7) "Popular movements begin how they can" (166) and so "if we wait to plunge into the fray until the people mount the anarchist-



communist colours, we shall run great risk of remaining eternal dreamers ... leaving a free field ... to our adversaries who are the enemies, conscious or unconscious, of the true interests of the people." (167)

Talking of flags, I had discovered when working on An Anarchist FAQ's "Symbols of Anarchy" appendix that anarchists were raising the black-and-red flag during the 1877 propaganda uprisings in Italy but did not know what it looked like. Now I do: "The flag adopted by the International is red, framed in black." (65)



No friend of police: Malatesta waiting to be tried in Bow, London in May 1912

Anarchist involvement in the trade union movement was, then, championed by Malatesta who, ironically, is sometimes represented as anti-syndicalist. In reality, on his return to Europe he helped – like Kropotkin – win the debate within the movement to return to its syndicalist strategies from Bakunin's time.

The picture of Malatesta the anti-syndicalist (rather than the syndicalist-plus) has been painted by those who misunderstand his critiques of those who turned means into ends as opposition to the shared means (class organisation and struggle).

What is the difference, then, between (revolutionary/communist) anarchism and (pure) syndicalism? Simply an awareness that unions are not inherently revolutionary and need anarchists to organise to influence them towards revolutionary aims and tactics. Hence Malatesta's constant argument that anarchists had to organise as anarchists to work within – and outwith – the unions.

Equally, while unions were an important aspect of anarchist activity he rightly rejected the idea that building unions automatically created anarchism or that syndicalism made anarchism redundant.

As can be seen from the texts in *The Method of Freedom*, he spent much time over many decades arguing against those who thought that syndicalism was sufficient in itself, recognising that a union needed to organise all workers to be effective and could not, therefore, be confused with an organisation of anarchists.

Both had their role to play and his conclusion was that the First International failed because it did not recognise this (a mistake he was keen to avoid repeating).

Similarly, while he viewed the general strike as a good means of starting a revolution it was a mistake – as some syndicalists did – to equate the two. His support of this tactic, again, predates the rise of syndicalism in France and so we find him in 1890 arguing that while the "general strike is preached and this is all to the good" it should not be confused with the revolution: "It would

the necessity of defending a revolution – had nothing in common with Marxist notions of "the dictatorship of the proletariat".

Much of his work in the 1920s reflects this perspective, inspired by the failure of the near revolution in Italy he had returned from London exile to take part in.

What comes out clearly from all his articles is that anarchism, for him, was not about utopias produced by revolutions which springs from nowhere but rather a set of principles which could and must be applied today in such a way as to bring the hoped for social revolution closer.

That perspective should be the default position within the movement and so newcomers to anarchism will discover a thinker who will show them anarchism as a practical idea while experienced anarchists will benefit from the wealth of ideas Malatesta gave the movement.

Needless to say, along with many newly translated articles and such essential works as *Anarchy*, *An Anarchist Programme* and *Towards Anarchy*, the book includes his polemics against Kropotkin's support for the Allies in 1914 (*Anarchists Have Forgotten their Principles* and *Pro-Government Anarchists*) as well as his *Peter Kropotkin: Recollections and Criticisms By One of His Old Friends*.

My one real complaint is that while it is of interest to read the 1891 translation of *Anarchy*, I hope that a new translation is planned for the appropriate volume of the *Collected Works* as it is dated to modern eyes. In addition, while this collection is broken up into sections corresponding, in the main, to the volumes of the planned *Collected Works* there are no articles from Malatesta's time in South America (1885 to 1889).

This is unfortunate as this time – with his active participation in a movement serious about organising unions – played a critical part in the advocacy of syndicalist tactics when he returned to Europe in 1889.



An excellent book, a work that enriches anarchism immensely

Happily, the relevant volume of the *Collected Works* will have material from this period.

All in all, though, there is little to complain about with this work and much to be excited about.

In a way, I have been waiting for this book since I first read *Anarchy* and *Errico Malatesta: Life and Ideas* when I was a teenager (over 25 years ago now) and Davide Turcato has not disappointed.

He must be congratulated for producing such an excellent book, a work that enriches anarchism immensely, will be read with benefit by all – anarchists and non-anarchists, new and experienced libertarian militants alike – and wets the appetite for the *Collected Works*. Read this book.



Reader: An admirable effort to unify Kropotkin's works

**Direct Struggle Against Capital:
A Peter Kropotkin Anthology**

£23.95
ISBN: 978-184935-1-70-6
by Peter Kropotkin, edited by Iain McKay
Pub: AK Press
660 pp

It is partly due to the nature of anarchist ideas and partly to contingencies of history, that its movements have not produced a unified, systematic and comprehensive collections of writings by leading thinkers to compete with the great collections of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky (to stick to the big four Marxists).

As a recovering Trotskyist, I know well that the massive editorial effort in the various complete and collected works available to Marxists pays off handsomely because there is in their case the apparent possibility of orthodoxy.

But this characteristic dogmatic unity of the Bolshevik movement, the tendency to systematise and schematise, is not only a result of the existence of this body of work – it is partly its cause.

Not so for the anarchists.

There is no anarchist Marx, no anarchist Capital serving as the single spring, widening to a stream that then forks at various points to produce the heresies and neo-orthodoxies.

And it is for anarchists a great advantage that this is so.

The monolithic nature of Marxism is not an advantage but a sign of rigidity of thought and of an insistence that there is one revolutionary philosophy that is proven scientifically correct.

Anarchists are not united by a philosophical dogma but by shared values, goals and strategies and are engaged not in the construction of a vanguard of ideologically-educated revolutionaries, but in the animation of the revolutionary spirit of workers through direct struggle against capital.

That said, anarchism has its great thinkers, including Kropotkin, and the activity of anarchists is enriched and strengthened by critical engagement with their works.

It has not always been easy to access the work of even the most well-known of the classical anarchist thinkers, certainly not expertly edited and intelligently selected. Iain McKay has contributed another volume to the effort to remedy this.

Here in his anthology of the most important of Kropotkin's writings, he makes available to the reader, in six sections, a very wide selection of Kropotkin in his own words, some of it in new translations made available to the English reading anarchist for the first time.

The collection has two great merits: It allows the reader to grasp the essential unity of Kropotkin's thought as he ranges over

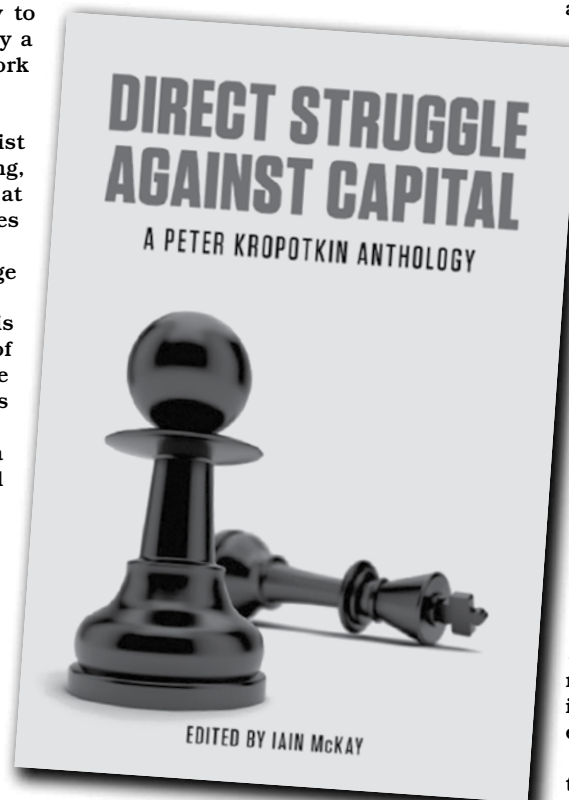
diverse topics – always coming back to his rejection of bourgeois politics, the futility of engaging in the political parties, the rejection of the state; always emphasising the link between direct workplace struggle and working class self-organisation.

And it illustrates the imbecility of the attempts to disarm Kropotkin, presenting him as a quasi-Tolstoyan prince of peace or a medievalist yearning for the guild system.

It must be emphasised however that these achievements should not overshadow the very real value of engaging with the specifics of Kropotkin's thought and here is the means to do that, whatever the topic.

For example, we can read in *Insurrections and Revolutions* of Kropotkin's commitment to uprisings against the state:

"If the Revolution is ever to be successful, local insurrections are called for. Indeed, huge numbers of them." (251) Indeed Kropotkin warns:



"If the careerist leaders of the proletarian movement today—be they intellectuals or workers—preach the opposite, it is because they want no truck with revolution at all" (251)

Which puts to rest the notion that Kropotkin was a Russian Gandhi who believed in no activity outside of struggle in the work place. To clarify the relation between the insurrection and the revolution he carries on later in the same essay

"We know that an uprising may well topple and change a government in one



It allows the reader to grasp the essential unity of Kropotkin's thought as he ranges over diverse topics

day, whereas a revolution, if it is to achieve a tangible outcome — a serious, lasting change in the distribution of economic forces — takes three or four years of revolutionary upheaval." (253)

Reading through the volume I was amazed at the breadth of Kropotkin's writing but also at the length of time of his involvement with the workers' movement – from the late nineteenth century until the first quarter of the 20th.

We have his commentary on historical struggle, on tactics and strategy, on the history of the movement and its fundamental ideas.

Kropotkin's own words are of inestimable value and it is a pleasure to contrast the direct clarity of his writing with the often constipated, labyrinthine prose of some of the Marxists (Ilyenkov, anyone?), but there is added value here in McKay's 100-page sketch of Kropotkin and his ideas.

McKay is well placed to take on the task of introducing Kropotkin, having recently published his essay on Kropotkin's Mutual Aid.

As with the introduction to his Proudhon volume *Property is Theft!*, McKay lays the foundation for an evaluation of his subject free from lazy and malicious distortions, whether from mainstream academia or the statist left. If, like me, you are relatively new to the history of anarchist ideas, the introduction provides a kick start to your education.

The key strategy towards Kropotkin from the academy and mainstream intellectuals has been to present him selectively (that's the polite word for it) and to depict what is left as a thinker of the second rank – interesting but not quite reaching the standards of, well, Marx or Isaiah Berlin (I can barely keep from laughing out loud writing that).

Kropotkin is a bearded Russian saint, preaching cooperation and peace or a scattershot writer who lacks the



philosophical sophistication to really engage with political thought.

This anthology gives the lie to that account. It demonstrates that Kropotkin had a clear understanding of the difficulty and danger of political struggle – of direct working class revolutionary activity – and demonstrated a clear insistence on its necessity.

Kropotkin moreover presents his ideas with a clarity and simplicity that I suspect infuriates an academic reader who has invested so much in the obscurantism of Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. Kropotkin, as is demonstrated in this volume, tells it like it is.

Is there a flaw? Perhaps. It is unlikely that any such collection could please everyone, being an exercise in selection. One might argue for inclusion of *The Manifesto of the Sixteen* to explain Kropotkin's attitude to the First World War.

It is likely however that this would add very little to our understanding of the man and his ideas, since it was, almost certainly, an aberration in his thought and perhaps, as Meltzer has suggested, a matter of misunderstanding and exaggeration.

In the history of anarchist ideas, we now have available a fine collection of Proudhon edited by McKay and an equally fine

collection of Kropotkin.

A volume of Bakunin is, I hear, in preparation.

Since anarchists don't sanctify any single person as the fount of all wisdom, we needn't bemoan the lack of a state-approved *Gesammelte Proudhon-Bakunin-Kropotkin Werke* and we can instead benefit from the rich unity in diversity of classical anarchist thought – all the easier with this volume to hand.

By
JT



Art: Disobedient Objects, now selling at the V&A

Disobedient Objects

Victoria and Albert Museum London (free)
Until February 1st 2015

It is not often that I go and look at some art and feel angry. No it wasn't because of some ill-thought-out piece of conceptual art made of hamster poo – I actually quite like that sort of stuff, rather it was the V&A's attempt to turn the activity and artefacts of protest into an exhibition.

Remember those spoof papers that were produced for the London Reclaim May

Day protests? A pretend Sun and *Evading Standards*, announcing that the General Election was cancelled. Well you can now view them in a class cabinet neatly aligned with, for god's sake, a copy of *Class War*. Who knew when being chased by the cops down the strand we were really performing an act of art. I wish I had kept the papers, they might be worth something now.

Of course the exhibition space is made to look a bit distressed and rad – cases and stands are made of cardboard for example.

In the space you can admire trade union banners, photos of Russian anarchists (not

that you are told their politics – all that matters is their nicely designed banner saying *You Cannot Imagine Us* – I only know they are anarchists because they have red and black flags), puppets, bikes ... all manner of protest paraphernalia and all out of context.

There is a lot of pretentious drivel about objects linking people but this exhibition shows how low protest has sunk. I am pretty sure the women from Greenham Common or Grunwick strikers, both featured here, thought their campaigns worth more than being sanitised for show. And for whom? I have no idea who this is aimed at.

There is something grotesque in finding post cards for sale in the shop of placed slogans (I wish my boyfriend was as dirty as your policies).

If you needed reminding art is as commodified as anything under capitalism. Want a shopping bag that folds down into a neat package that looks like a hand grenade? Yours for £6.99!

Being the V&A, protest had to fit into accepted ideas of acceptability. Nothing from the right for example because that would offend their liberal middle class clientele. It would offend me too but at least it would be honest. If protest can be reduced to art, then surely it doesn't matter where it comes from?

There is a lot of creative stuff here. Most familiar to readers of *Black Flag*. In context (ie, actual protest) a lot of it is good. There is no doubt the last few decades has seen a lot of inspiring ideas about how to protest against, for example, detention of immigrants or the death penalty.

The last few decades have also been a period of defeat after defeat. The revolution probably will not come from the welding of well-made puppets.

Actually thinking about it may be its appropriate a lot of this stuff has ended up here: neatly packaged for consumption in between exhibitions of wedding dresses and Italian fashion.



Which people? The main mural outside the V&A.

Picture: Julian Osley

By Richard
Griffin



Reader: Weighty research is best in English language

Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Reader

£25
ISBN: 978-184935-0-24-2
by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon,
edited by Iain McKay
Pub. AK Press
670pp

During his lifetime Pierre-Joseph Proudhon published two dozen works, ranging from pamphlets to the six-volume *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*. Another 15 were published posthumously. His published notebooks and correspondence add another seventeen volumes, and his unpublished manuscripts (many of which are now being digitized by the Ville de Besançon) contain several thousand pages of important material.

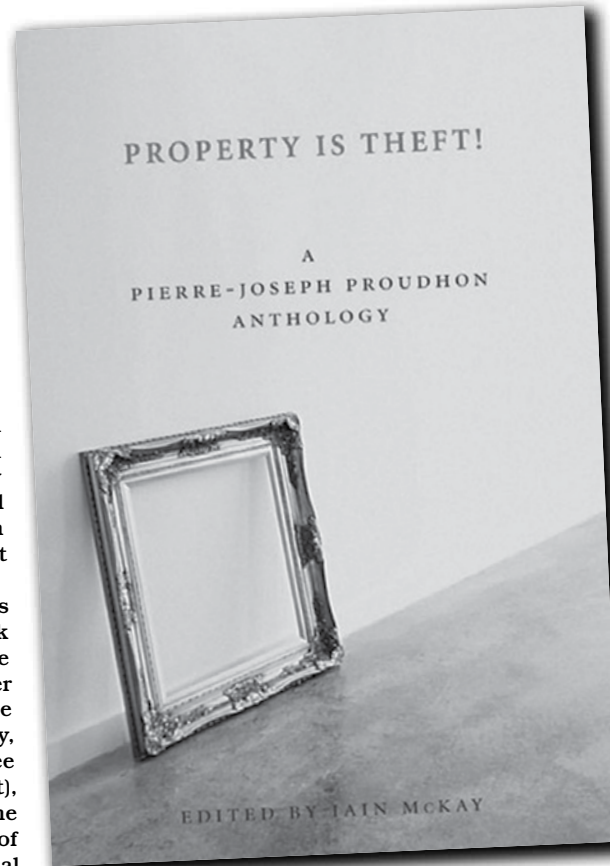
Yet until recently all that has been available of Proudhon's work in English has been four complete volumes (*What is Property?*, *Letter to M. Blanqui*, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, and the debate with French free market economist Frédéric Bastiat), partial translations of four others (*The Principle of Federation*, *System of Economic Contradictions*, *The Social Revolution Demonstrated by the Coup d'Etat*, and *Literary Majorats*), a few essays, and a haphazard collection of short excerpts.

No comprehensive anthology has existed. As a result, first-hand knowledge of Proudhon's thought among English readers has generally been limited to a few early works.

Iain McKay's *Property is Theft!* is an attempt to fill that particular void, and one that is in many ways quite successful. The task was obviously daunting. While the new anthology contains nearly 700 pages of texts, that's still a very small sample.

The decision to include complete texts, or at least extensive excerpts, was a substantial improvement over the previous anthology (*Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, edited by Stewart Edwards and published in 1969), where the twists and turns of Proudhon's often complex arguments were almost inevitably lost, but it also seems to have contributed to an imbalance in the coverage of Proudhon's career.

Proudhon himself pointed to a kind of watershed in his thinking, with the critical work of the 1840s giving way to a constructive work in the years following the coup d'état of 1851. It is his early period that gave us "property is theft!" and the early expressions of Proudhon's anarchism. It includes the revolutionary period following the February Revolution in 1848, when Proudhon honed his anti-governmental



critique in the context of the short-lived Second French Republic.

This period is well covered in *Property is Theft!* but missing are any of Proudhon's writings from before *What is Property?* or any excerpts from the 1843 *Creation*



It is a powerful corrective to the second-hand Proudhon we have inherited from Marx

of *Order in Humanity*, where Proudhon adapted the ideas of Charles Fourier.

There are however ample selections from the early works on property and well-chosen selections from Proudhon's controversies during the Second Republic, including his promotion of free credit and his debate on interest with Bastiat.

The major works of the late Republic, *Confessions of a Revolutionary* and *General Idea of the Revolution* are also represented. This is the Proudhon with which English readers are most familiar, presented with

a depth that is unfamiliar, refreshing and enlightening. This material, which accounts for most of the collection, has to be considered a triumph.

The constructive Proudhon is much less well represented. Two sections from *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, probably the most important of his published works, provide important insights into Proudhon's philosophical and sociological ideas. A close reading of these texts is recommended as a means of digging deeper into the other writings.

Excerpts from *The Federative Principle* and *The Political Capacity of the Working Classes* likewise present glimpses of Proudhon's vision for an anti-authoritarian society, with the latter outlining some of the details of the "mutualist system" that he promoted to the Parisian workers at the end of his life. The concluding chapter of the posthumous *Theory of Property* is included as an appendix, but extensive editing and a rather dismissive introduction limit its usefulness. Most notably absent is any material from *War and Peace*, Proudhon's two-volume study of international relations and the role of conflict in society.

The weakness of the anthology's portrayal of the later Proudhon arises in part from the sheer difficulty of excerpting representative sections from the complex, lengthy works of the late 1850s and 1860s. But it is also the case that this later Proudhon remains much less familiar to English readers, and perhaps to most readers, and that there is a well-established pattern of neglect and mistrust of this later material among anarchists. Here, McKay's treatment breaks new ground, but less enthusiastically.

Whether McKay's emphasis on the early, critical works constitutes a virtue or a shortcoming will probably depend on whether you are more sympathetic to Proudhon's mutualism or to McKay's communism. As the introduction and notes make clear, this is a work designed to introduce Proudhon to an anarchist mainstream that has largely written off his particular form of anarchism as a kind of infantile disorder. It is a powerful corrective to the second-hand Proudhon we have inherited from Marx, or even Kropotkin.

As a sort of long footnote to the work that McKay has been doing in *An Anarchist FAQ*, it is an important contribution. As a comprehensive introduction to Proudhon it is less successful, but it will unquestionably be remembered as an absolutely critical early step in any successful reclamation of Proudhon's mature work.

By Shawn P. Wilbur
proudhonlibrary.org



To mark the 100th anniversary of the First World War, Black Flag is reprinting the manifesto issued in 1915 by leading members of the international anarchist movement.

Most anarchists took a principled anti-war and anti-imperialist position.

AN INTERNATIONAL ANARCHIST MANIFESTO ON THE WAR

LONDON, 1915

EUROPE IN A BLAZE. 12 million men engaged in the most frightful butchery that history has ever recorded; millions of women and children in tears; the economic, intellectual, and moral life of seven great peoples brutally suspended, and the menace becoming every day more pregnant with new military complications – such is, for seven months, the painful, agonising, and hateful spectacle presented by the civilised world.

But a spectacle not unexpected – at least, by the anarchists, since for them there never has been nor is there any doubt – the terrible events of today strengthen this conviction – that war is permanently fostered by the present social system.

Armed conflict, restricted or widespread, colonial or European, is the natural consequence and the inevitable and fatal outcome of a society that is founded on the exploitation of the workers, rests on the savage struggle of the classes, and compels Labour to submit to the domination of a minority of parasites who hold both political and economic power.

The war was inevitable. Wherever it originated, it had to come. It is not in vain that for half a century there has been a feverish preparation of the most formidable armaments and a ceaseless increase in the budgets of death.

It is not by constantly improving the weapons of war and by concentrating the mind and the will of all upon the better organisation of the military machine that people work for peace.

Therefore, it is foolish and childish, after having multiplied the causes and occasions of conflict, to seek to fix the responsibility on this or that government.

No possible distinction can be drawn between offensive and defensive wars. In the present conflict, the governments of Berlin and Vienna have sought to justify themselves by documents not less authentic than those of the governments of Paris and Petrograd.

Each does its very best to produce the most indisputable and the most decisive documents in order to establish its good faith and to present itself as the immaculate defender of right and liberty and the champion of civilisation.

Civilisation? Who, then, represents it just now?

Is it the German State, with its formidable militarism, and so powerful that it has stifled every disposition to revolt?

Is it the Russian State, to whom the knout, the gibbet, and Siberia are the sole means of persuasion?

Is it the French State, with its Biribi, its bloody conquests in Tonkin, Madagascar,

Morocco, and its compulsory enlistment of black troops? France, that detains in its prisons, for years, comrades guilty only of having written and spoken against war?

Is it the English State, which exploits, divides, and oppresses the populations of its immense colonial empire?

No; none of the belligerents is entitled to invoke the name of civilisation or to declare itself in a state of legitimate defence.

The truth is that the cause of wars, of that which at present stains with blood the plains of Europe, as of all wars that have preceded it, rests solely in the existence of the State, which is the political form of privilege.

The State has arisen out of military force, it has developed through the use of military force, and it is still on military force that it must logically rest in order to maintain its omnipotence.

Whatever the form it may assume, the State is nothing but organised oppression for the advantage of a privileged minority. The present conflict illustrates this in the most striking manner.

All forms of the State are engaged in the present war; absolutism with Russia, absolutism softened by Parliamentary institutions with Germany, the State ruling over peoples of quite different races with Austria, a democratic constitutional regime with England, and a democratic Republican regime with France.

The misfortune of the peoples, who were deeply attached to peace, is that, in order to avoid war, they placed their confidence in the State with its intriguing diplomatists, in democracy, and in political parties (not excluding those in opposition, like Parliamentary Socialism).

This confidence has been deliberately betrayed, and continues to be so, when governments, with the aid of the whole of their press, persuade their respective peoples that this war is a war of liberation.

We are resolutely against all wars between peoples, and in neutral countries, like Italy, where the governments seek to throw fresh peoples into the fiery furnace of war, our comrades have been, are, and ever will be most energetically opposed to war.

The role of the anarchists in the present tragedy, whatever may be the place or the situation in which they find themselves, is to continue to proclaim that there is but one war of liberation: that which in all countries is waged by the oppressed against the oppressors, by the exploited against the exploiters. Our part is to summon the slaves to revolt against their masters.

Anarchist action and propaganda should assiduously and perseveringly aim at weakening and dissolving the various States, at cultivating the spirit of revolt, and arousing discontent in peoples and armies.

To all the soldiers of all countries who believe they are fighting for justice and liberty, we have to declare that their heroism and their valour will but serve to perpetuate hatred, tyranny, and misery.

To the workers in factory and mine it is necessary to recall that the rifles they now have in their hands have been used against them in the days of strike and of revolt and that later on they will be again used against them in order to compel them to undergo and endure capitalist exploitation.

To the workers on farm and field it is necessary to show that after the war they will be obliged once more to bend beneath the yoke and to continue to cultivate the lands of their lords and to feed the rich.

To all the outcasts, that they should not part with their arms until they have settled accounts with their oppressors, until they have taken land and factory and workshop for themselves.

To mothers, wives, and daughters, the victims of increased misery and privation, let us show who are the ones really responsible for their sorrows and for the massacre of their fathers, sons, and husbands.

We must take advantage of all the movements of revolt, of all the discontent, in order to foment insurrection, and to organise the revolution to which we look to put an end to all social wrongs.

No despondency, even before a calamity like the present war. It is periods thus troubled, in which many thousands of men heroically give their lives for an idea, that we must show these men the generosity, greatness, and beauty of the anarchist ideal: Social justice realised through the free organisation of producers; war and militarism done away with forever; and complete freedom won, by the abolition of the State and its organs of destruction.

SIGNED: Leonard D. Abbott, Alexander Berkman, L. Bertoni, L. Bersani, G. Bernard, G. Barrett, A. Bernardo, E. Boudot, A. Calzitta, Joseph J. Cohen, Henry Combes, Nestor Ciele van Diepen, F.W. Dunn, Ch. Frigerio, Emma Goldman, V. Garcia, Hippolyte Havel, T.H. Keell, Harry Kelly, J. Lemaire, E. Malatesta, H. Marques, F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, Noel Panavich, E. Recchioni, G. Rijnders, I. Rochtchine, A. Savioli, A. Schapiro, William Shatoff, V.J.C. Schermerhorn, C. Trombetti, P. Vallina, G. Vignati, Lillian G. Woolf, S. Yanovsky.



In colour: Italian reds

Graphic displays: Scenes from Florence and Rome earlier this year showing some of the vast array of graphics that still cover the streets in left-wing Italian communities. The three murals can all be found (assuming they haven't been painted over yet) in the Via dei Campani, near the anarchist bookshop Libreria Anomalia.



STUFF YOUR BOSS DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW

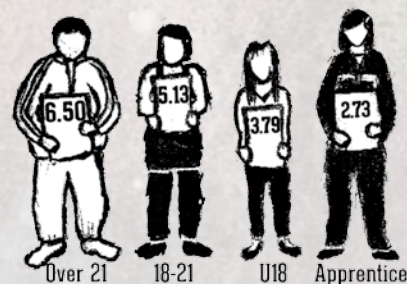
pay

Your boss has to tell you what your pay and conditions are in writing



There are different **minimum wages** for different groups.

(Numbers are correct from October 2014-15)



safety

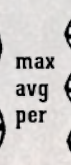
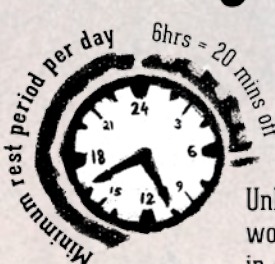
Adequate equipment and training must be provided. If it isn't, you have the right to walk off the job until it's sorted out



and/or



working hours



max
avg
per

unless...



Unless you opt out, it is illegal to make you work more than an average of 48 hours a week in a given 17-week period

disciplinary

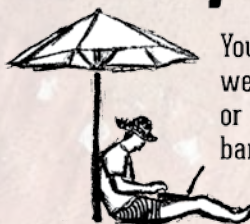
Your boss must give you time to build a case



You are allowed to bring a union fulltimer, your local rep, or a colleague into a tribunal, and it's important to do that so you have a witness



holidays



You're entitled to 5.6 weeks off a year, or 28 days in total, bank holidays included



Part-timers get the same 5.6 weeks as full time staff, adjusted for their work hours

change at work



=



If it's not in the contract, the boss can't make you change what you do or how without either permission or a flexibility clause

joining unions



You are within your rights to join a trade union



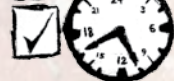
It is illegal for your boss to threaten or bribe staff not to join or to go for a different union

sick pay



pre-tax income of £109+ per week and

3 months+ in work or 13 weeks continuous



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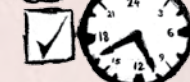


After four days of illness, as long as you tell work. After 7 days a doctor must sign you off. You can get 28 weeks in a year

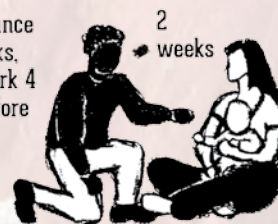
time off for a baby



Paying National Insurance and in job for 26 weeks, plus informing work 4 weeks before



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2 weeks



6 weeks paid 90% of wage

33 weeks paid £136.78 maximum



=

2 weeks



39 weeks adoption pay at 90% of wage

Know your rights:

This poster is adapted from the October 2014-October 2015 edition of Solidarity Federation's working rights pamphlet series. For more check out solfed.org.uk